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FORTY YEARS OF SEMITIC PHILOLOGY

STUDIES IN HONOUR OF RICCARDO CONTINI, OFFERED BY FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES ON THE OCCASION OF HIS SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY

Edited by
Maria Maddalena Colasuonno, Alfredo Criscuolo,
Luca D'anna, Raffaele Esposito, Gianfrancesco Lusini,
Mara Nicosia

Volume I

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Riccardo Contini at Sana'a, 1993 (courtesy of Giovanni Canova)



Riccardo Contini at Marib, 1993 (courtesy of Giovanni Canova)



Riccardo Contini in Jerusalem, June 2013 (courtesy of Matthew Morgenstern)





Riccardo Contini in Paris, July 2022 (courtesy of Matthew Morgenstern)

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Prefazione

A Riccardo

Sarebbe stato superfluo dedicare queste pagine introduttive a una mera ricapitolazione dei meriti scientifici e accademici di Riccardo Contini, intellettuale di fama internazionale e professore di Filologia Semitica nei maggiori centri di studi orientalistici del nostro Paese, nei quali per oltre un quarantennio ha svolto un ruolo di riferimento sicuro per generazioni di studenti e studentesse avvicendatisi nell'ascolto delle sue lezioni. In Italia e all'estero, molti colleghi e colleghe avrebbero argomenti solidi e comprovata esperienza per illustrare puntualmente quanto egli ha fatto nei decenni della sua infaticabile attività universitaria, fra incarichi didattici, pubblicazione di saggi, direzione di progetti di ricerca, missioni scientifiche, conferenze e seminari. Una scorsa all'indice ricchissimo di questa raccolta è sufficiente a dare un'idea della fitta trama di rapporti umani e professionali tessuta dal semitista che più di ogni altro ha saputo coniugare una disciplina tanto vasta e complessa all'esigenza di coglierne il nesso più profondo con la storia dell'umanesimo, con l'origine stessa e con lo sviluppo del progetto civile e culturale europeo.

In realtà, i curatori e le curatrici di questa ghirlanda di contributi che chi legge ha ora tra le proprie mani altro non sono che un manipolo di allievi e allieve di Riccardo, appartenenti a generazioni diverse, ma che hanno avviato o perfezionato sotto la sua guida la propria formazione. Al nostro comune Maestro, nell'anno in cui egli compie i settant'anni, abbiamo voluto dedicare in primo luogo

il tempo occorso per la realizzazione di questo progetto editoriale corale, quasi a voler contraccambiare in questo modo le energie da lui profuse per indirizzare con mano sicura i nostri primi e più incerti passi. Consapevoli del debito di riconoscenza contratto verso Riccardo, abbiamo sentito la necessità di far convergere le nostre forze verso un obiettivo comune, ovvero una raccolta di scritti in suo onore, sollecitando oltre sessanta studiosi e studiose da tre continenti a contribuirvi, a testimonianza della loro amicizia, stima e ammirazione nei confronti del dedicatario.

Tra di noi vi è chi, per un poco invidiabile privilegio dell'età, ha potuto seguire i primi corsi impartiti da Riccardo Contini in qualità di ricercatore confermato. Fin dal 1981, nell'ambito del corso di Filologia Semitica, tenuto da Giovanni Garbini presso la Scuola Normale di Pisa, al venticinquenne e già brillante semitista fiorentino (nato il 10 aprile 1956 e laureatosi in Lettere nel novembre 1978) era stato proposto di tenere nel prestigioso ateneo pisano un seminario di aramaico biblico. Nei commenti al testo di Daniele, nelle osservazioni di linguistica comparata, nei riferimenti alla storia della cultura del Vicino Oriente Antico, il giovanissimo docente schiudeva le menti dei suoi primi allievi e vi infondeva lo stupore per una scienza nuova.

Le tappe successive del percorso accademico di Riccardo sono note: trasferito a Roma "La Sapienza" nel 1984, passa a Venezia Ca' Foscari nel 1990, prima come supplente, poi come professore associato, a partire dal 1992. A Napoli, presso l'allora Istituto Universitario Orientale, egli approda nel 1999, divenendo straordinario di Filologia semitica dal 1° gennaio 2001, ordinario dal 1° gennaio 2004 fino al pensionamento, il 1° Novembre 2024. Questi venticinque anni di attività sono stati densi di incarichi: ricordiamo almeno la presidenza del Centro di Studi Ebraici (2009-2016) e poi del Centro di Studi sull'Oriente Cristiano (2018-2022), nell'ambito del progetto Dipartimento di Eccellenza. Ai Dottorati di ricerca, quello in Vicino Oriente Antico e Asia (di cui è stato coordinatore dal 2011 al 2013), e quello in Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo, Riccardo ha dato un contributo di particolare importanza, marcando un passaggio che è stato decisivo anche per molti di noi, aspiranti semitisti e semitiste. Intellettuale poliglotta,

europeo per educazione e vocazione, meglio di altri egli ha visto nelle reti dottorali transnazionali uno strumento idoneo alla creazione di relazioni accademiche non influenzate dalle barriere linguistiche e politiche, veri ponti immateriali gettati verso la comprensione reciproca fra uomini e culture.

Per oltre un quarantennio, nel quadro degli studi di filologia e linguistica semitica e afroasiatica, la figura di Riccardo Contini si è affermata come un riferimento insostituibile per studiosi e studiose di ogni provenienza e affiliazione. Dai suoi maestri accademici in Italia, Giovanni Garbini e Paolo Marrassini, e all'estero, *in primis* David Cohen, egli ha tratto la sua riconosciuta e non comune sensibilità per la trattazione di problemi di storia linguistica del Vicino Oriente lungo un arco temporale di oltre tre millenni. La sua produzione scientifica testimonia il vastissimo spettro dei suoi interessi, comprendenti la lingua e la storia ebraica antica in rapporto al resto del cananaico, le varie fasi di sviluppo dei dialetti aramaici, con particolare attenzione al siriaco, la formazione dell'arabo, con le sue varietà, dall'età preislamica ai giorni nostri. Gli effetti del magistero di Riccardo sono stati profondi e duraturi, e han dato vita a una scuola di studi semitici, con numerosi rappresentanti all'interno dell'attuale panorama accademico nazionale e internazionale, non solo presso l'Università di Napoli "L'Orientale". Della sua disponibilità a trasmettere il proprio sapere hanno beneficiato e beneficiano almeno tre generazioni di studiosi e studiose, che testimoniano con gratitudine le grandi doti di comunicatore scientifico del loro Maestro.

Uno sguardo alla bibliografia di Riccardo, che segue questa prefazione, permette non solo di apprezzare la straordinaria varietà e profondità delle sue ricerche linguistiche, spesso frutto di indagini dirette, come quelle condotte all'interno di missioni in Yemen e Oman, ma anche la sua non comune attitudine alla ricostruzione filologica. La sua capacità di inquadrare questioni storico-letterarie di particolare ampiezza è testimoniata dal coordinamento di progetti di ricerca dedicati a tematiche di grande varietà linguistica e culturale, come nel caso del romanzo e dei proverbi di Ahiqar. Alle continue cesure e riprese dell'era 'assiale', ai dialoghi e ai conflitti religiosi di contesto orientale in età tardoantica e moderna, ai

complessi passaggi di temi e forme dall'una all'altra delle religioni storiche, Riccardo ha dedicato lavori densissimi e illuminanti. Sono ancora imprescindibili, ad esempio, il suo saggio sulla Τέχνη γραμματική di Dioniso Trace in versione siriaca, le sue ipotesi sull'aramaico manicheo, le considerazioni sulla lingua del Beth Qaṭraye o il suggerimento di identificare nel *maqrəyānā* l'unico esempio di linguista "di professione" presso le scuole siro-orientali. I suoi saggi e le sue recensioni non sono soltanto raffinati esempi di un rigoroso metodo critico che si innesta su un'impressionante erudizione, ma rappresentano dei fari, accesi a indicare con chiarezza il cammino da percorrere.

Non saremmo di parola se ora ci dilungassimo oltre esponendo cose universalmente note. Ma una cosa sentiamo di poter assicurare: col suo magistero e la sua attitudine a condividere pacatamente e generosamente le proprie monumentali conoscenze, Riccardo ha realmente lasciato nelle menti di quanti e quante lo hanno frequentato una traccia duratura e fruttuosa, e ha infuso nelle nostre coscienze quell'amore per la cultura e la verità che in tempi brutali e volgari come quelli che siamo costretti a vivere è rimasto l'ultimo viatico di un cammino sempre più incerto.

Napoli, Messina, Padova, marzo 2026
I curatori e le curatrici

A List of Contributions by Riccardo Contini

I. Articles, essays, monographs and editions

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Tabula Gratulatoria

Over the course of his long career, Riccardo Contini came in touch and worked with many scholars, with whom he established strong ties of mutual esteem and friendship. Some of these scholars, who could not partake in this volume with a paper, wish to express their gratitude for his friendship, guidance, mentorship, or simply for his profound generosity in sharing his knowledge.

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[1] M. G. Amadasi Guzzo era intenzionata a contribuire a questa raccolta di scritti con un testo dal titolo (provvisorio) *Note su iscrizioni fenicie da Sidone*.

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Aramaic Studies

The Aramaic Words in the Hebrew Toledot Yeshu*: Judeo-Syriac?*

CHRISTIAN STADEL

Throughout his career, the honoree of this Festschrift has – inter alia – produced remarkable studies that shed light on easily-overlooked and (arguably) somewhat obscure Semitic languages or texts. In the field of Aramaic, these include his masterful 'Hypothèses sur l'araméen manichéen' and the study 'La lingua del Bēt Qaṭrāyē'.[1] In this modest tribute to Riccardo Contini, I shall follow suit and investigate a neglected subject: the Aramaic words and phrases scattered throughout Hebrew versions of the *Toledot Yeshu*.

Keywords: Aramaic – Hebrew – *Toledot Yeshu* – scribal interpolation – festival names

1. Toledot Yeshu: *A Minimalist Introduction*

The composition known as *Toledot Yeshu* is a collection of Jewish polemical texts that subversively relate episodes from the life of Jesus with clear anti-Christian bias. The work exists in three distinct recensions (that can be subdivided further), which differ in the number of plot elements they relate,[2] in the literary figures chosen

[1] Contini 1995; 2003.

[2] Since the text of *Toledot Yeshu* grew over time, it is customary to divide it into smaller (often stand-alone) textual units, the plot elements, whose names follow the headings in Meerson – Schäfer 2014. When referring to even shorter

as prominent adversaries to Yeshu, in the languages in which they are known, and in the geographical distribution of the respective manuscripts.[3] The earliest known recension, the so-called Pilate recension, is preserved in early Genizah fragments in Aramaic (from the tenth century onward); it is also extant in Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic translations.[4] Sometime prior to the eleventh century CE, the Pilate recension was expanded into the so-called Helene recension, which is preserved in Judeo-Arabic and Hebrew (as well as in additional European and Oriental languages), but not in Aramaic.[5] The most recent recension, sometimes called Wagenseil after its first printer, is extant only in Hebrew and European languages in late manuscripts from the sixteenth century onward.

Thus, the core of *Toledot Yeshu* was originally composed in Aramaic, probably in the Late Antique or early Islamic Near East. While the exact nature of the Aramaic dialect of the Pilate recension of *Toledot Yeshu* is contested,[6] it stands to reason that it was (at least in the final form we encounter in the Genizah manuscripts) an Aramaic literary language that is not identical with any of the Middle or Late Aramaic Jewish literary languages, viz., Targumic Aramaic, Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, or Jewish Babylonian Aramaic. The later expansions of the *Toledot Yeshu*, and the Helene recension in particular, which would become so popular both in Europe and the Near East, grew out of the Hebrew translation of the Pilate recension and are not attested in Aramaic at all. However, two plot elements of these Hebrew expansions of the Helene recension preserve Aramaic bits and pieces, to which we shall turn now.[7]

identifiable independent textual units in a plot element, I shall use the term micro-form.

[3] Meerson – Schäfer 2014, 1: 28-39 (Groups I–III).

[4] For a recent concise overview of the Pilate recension see Bohak 2020, 83-89.

[5] For a recent concise overview of the Helene recension see Goldstein 2021, 85-88.

[6] Smelik 2009; Sokoloff 2011.

[7] For the purpose of this study, I disregard the Aramaic words that are variously scattered throughout the text of the Early Yemenite subgroup of the Helene recension, cf. Meerson – Schäfer 2014, 1, 68-70. I surmise that these are

2. Aramaic in the Hebrew Toledot Yeshu

The Aramaic phrases that form part of the Hebrew Helene recension were first (and very briefly) addressed by Louis Ginzberg, who noted that the language was corrupt and suggested that the scribe copied these corrupt passages (Ginzberg refers explicitly to the first one, see 2.1) in their original form from the Aramaic Vorlage, since they were unintelligible and therefore could not be translated into Hebrew.[8] Samuel Krauß took the opposite stance: based on a comparison of the lexical material with Syriac and Jewish Aramaic, he concluded that the phrases and individual words are Syriac (written in square script), even though he did not offer an explanation for how linguistic material in a Christian Aramaic language ended up in the Hebrew *Toledot Yeshu*.[9] After some seventy-five years of scholarly silence on the matter, Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra picked up the discussion. Following a fresh lexicographical investigation of the Aramaic festival names in the second plot element (2.2) and based on an analysis of the Christian calendar that is reflected in the series of these names, he concluded that this section probably goes back to a late-fourth or early-fifth century Syriac list.[10] While taking issue with some of the implications of Stökl Ben Ezra's conclusions that pertain to the dating and the literary connection of the list with the Helene recension, Michael Meerson and Peter Schäfer accept the assumption that the festival names are Syriac.[11]

In the following two sections, I shall present the manuscript evidence for the Aramaic phrases and discuss and reassess the

best interpreted as a feature of the specific literary language of this subgroup, viz. of the language of the respective manuscripts, which evince haphazard switches between Hebrew and Aramaic, e.g., in the Second Trial plot element: JTS6312 אנחנו בני אלהא דשמיא, Gross67 אנחנא בנא אלהא דשמיא, but later on in JTS6312 אנחנו בני אלהים.

[8] Ginzberg 1928, 1: 328.

[9] Krauß 1933, 45-47.

[10] Stökl Ben Ezra 2009. The basic tenets of this investigation are upheld in subsequent publications: Stökl Ben Ezra 2011, 26; 2021, 363.

[11] Meerson – Schäfer 2014, 1: 105-107.

nature of the Aramaic dialect they reflect. The text of the Hebrew *Toledot Yeshu* is attested in more than one hundred manuscripts. In this study, I limit myself to the text of the Aramaic phrases as it appears in the manuscripts that are included in the recent edition by Meerson and Schäfer.[12]

2.1 Reported Speech "in Aramaic" in the Burial Plot Element

The first piece of what is purportedly Aramaic comes from the Burial plot element of the Helene recension. Lads from the sons of Israel are said to have addressed the mourners in front of Yeshu' s tomb in Aramaic.

Strasb3974 (Ashkenazi A)[13]

אמרו להם בלשון ארמית **מאי איתיב איסכלי נטלי לקברא**

JTS2343 (Late Yemenite A)[14]

אמרו להון בלשון ארמית **מאי אותיבי כלבים נטוי בקברא או ספיקא**

Camb455 (Late Yemenite A)[15] **מאי אתיבי כלבים נטוי בקבריה או פסקא**

Parma2300 (Italian B)[16] ואמר להם כל **אדנוי יחיני איסכמי איספיקא**

Ox21 (Italian B)[17] **אסוי יחידי איסכמי איספיקא**

JNUL2667 (Italian B)[18] **בל אדנוי יחיני אסכימי איספיקא**

[12] *Ibid.*, vol. 2. I employ the manuscript sigla from this edition and provide more details on the manuscripts in the footnotes.

[13] Strasbourg, Bibliothèque Universitaire et Régionale ms. 3974 (Hebr. 48), 17th century, Ashkenazic semi-cursive. See Meerson – Schäfer 2014, 2: 39-40 (manuscript), 92 (text).

[14] Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, ms. 4934a (R1720), 18th century, square script. See Meerson - Schäfer 2014, 2: 26 (manuscript), 121 (text).

[15] Cambridge University Library, ms. Or. 455 (557), 19th century, Yemenite script. See Meerson – Schäfer 2014, 2: 6 (manuscript), 121 fn. 58 (text).

[16] Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, ms. 2300 (De Rossi 124), 17th century, Italian semi-cursive. See Meerson – Schäfer 2014, 2: 33 (manuscript), 204 (text).

[17] Bodleian Library, Oxford, ms. Opp. Add. 21 (Cod. Heb. 2177), 17th–18th century, Italian cursive. See Meerson – Schäfer 2014, 2: 28–29 (manuscript), 204 fn. 109 (text).

[18] National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, ms. Heb. 8˚ 2667, early 18th century, Italian cursive. See Meerson – Schäfer 2014, 2: 14 (manuscript), 204 fn. 109 (text).

Parma2091 (Italian B)[19]	ואמר להם כל זמן **אדנוי יחייבי איספיקא**
JNUL102 (Italian B)[20]	**אדנוי יחייני איפיקא**
Leipz17 (Italian A)[21]	ויאמר להם בלשון ארמי **יחיני איס כלי איספיקא**

Notably, in one manuscript of the Ashkenazi B subgroup, the respective phrases were replaced by a Hebrew sentence that is presented as a translation from the Aramaic: JTS2221[22] אמר הבחורים זה לזה בלשון ארמית בדרך שחוק והיתול ראו על מה הם יושבים השוטים אללו על הקבר, «The young men said to each other in Aramaic, as a joke and a prank, 'See what those fools are sitting on, on the grave».

Krauß authored the only detailed discussion of these Aramaic phrases, but Meerson and Schäfer recently expressed doubts as to the reliability of his study.[23] The manuscript evidence forms the basis for any analysis of the language. Even a superficial look at the texts reveals that the manuscripts attest to three different versions of the phrase. A long, six or seven-word version appears in Ashkenazi A and Late Yemenite A manuscripts, e.g., Strasb3974 מאי איתיב איסכלי נטלי לקברא איספיקא. An intermediary, four or five-word version is attested in Italian B manuscripts, e.g., Parma 2300 אדנוי יחיני איסכמי איספיקא. And two short, three or four-word versions are known from Italian A and B manuscripts, e.g., Parma2091 אדנוי יחייבי איספיקא vs. Leipz17 יחיני איס כלי איספיקא. Only the last word, איספיקא or the like, is common to all three versions, even though other differences in the readings could be interpreted as resulting from copying errors.

The only words that can be read as Aramaic (without emendations) all come from the long version: קברא is the common Aramaic word for 'tomb', מאי can be interpreted in Jewish

[19] Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, ms. 2091 (De Rossi 1271), 18th century, Italian cursive. See Meerson – Schäfer 2014, 2: 33 (manuscript), 204 (text).

[20] National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, ms. Heb. 8° 102, 18th century, Italian cursive. See Meerson - Schäfer 2014, 2: 11 (manuscript), 204 fn. 109 (text).

[21] Universiätsbibliothek Leipzig, ms B. H. 17 (1), end of 17th century, Italian semi-cursive. See Meerson - Schäfer 2014, 2: 17 (manuscript), 175 (text).

[22] Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, ms. 2221, end of 17th century, Sephardic semi-cursive. See Meerson – Schäfer 2014, 2: 23 (manuscript), 108 (text), 1: 200 (translation).

[23] Krauß 1933, 46; Meerson – Schäfer 2014, 1: 23.

Babylonian Aramaic as 'what',[24] and איתיב is a common Jewish Babylonian Aramaic orthography for the Perfect verbal form 'he sat'.[25] Neither of these forms is characteristic of Syriac. And what's more, even one of the forms that, according to Krauß, we can «schwerlich anders als im Syrischen finden» is not indicative of that dialect.[26] נטל can only be interpreted as Syriac by assuming an elliptical expression 'to lift [the eyes]', which is not recorded in Syriac dictionaries.[27] Only the form ספיקא 'empty' can be linked to Syriac in particular.[28] This meager evidence, and the fact that ספיקא does not combine with the other words to form a well-formed Aramaic sentence, essentially confirms Ginzberg' s early verdict. In its present forms as preserved in the various manuscripts, the phrase is clearly corrupted. None of the versions constitutes idiomatic Aramaic, and, consequently, there is no basis for classifying the phrase as Syriac. It is gibberish.[29]

2.2 The Festival Names in the First Separation Plot Element

In addition, various manuscripts of the Helene recension contain Aramaic names of Jewish and Christian festivals in the First Separation plot element that details theological differences between the two faiths:

[24] Sokoloff 2002, 634.

[25] *Ibid.*, 545.

[26] Krauß 1933, 46.

[27] Sokoloff 2009, 912; cp. also Stephen A. Kaufman's *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon* (https://cal.huc.edu/), s.v. *spyq*. The respective lemma in Brockelmann 1928, 425, to which Krauß refers, clearly marks the meaning 'to look' as characteristic of Jewish Aramaic dialects, not Syriac.

[28] Sokoloff 2009, 1031.

[29] This implies, of course, that the attempts at translating the phrase (e.g., Meerson – Schäfer 2014, 1: 178, 214), which ultimately rely on Krauß' faulty understanding, are obsolete. If one were to avoid assuming a heavy corruption and rather consider the gibberish as original, one could perhaps argue that it was not the unintelligible words as such that were important to this narrative unit, but the labeling of the speech as Aramaic. This could then be another case of Aramaic – or here rather would-be Aramaic – used as a religio-linguistic marker for Christians. A comparable usage of Aramaic is attested in the Judeo-Arabic anti-Christian polemic 'Account of a Disputation of the Priest', see Stadel 2020, 287-290.

Strasb3974 (Ashkenazi A)[30]
ובשביל פסח שעושין ישראל עשו אותם **עדה דקיימתא** שעמד בו מקברו ובשביל **עצרתא סולקא** והוא יום שעלה בו שמים ובשביל ראש השנה **אשכבתא דצליבא** ובשביל **צומא רבא גזורתא** ובשביל חנוכה **קלנדא** אף לא **ערליתא מדי** אף לא **גזורתא** **מדי** [ ]

Amst414 (Ashkenazi B)[31]
ובמקום שהיהודים חוגגים את חג הפסח תעשו לזכרון **עד קיימא** ר"ל יום שהוא עד שעלה לשמים ובמקום שעושים חג עצרת תעשו לזכרון חג **סולקא** ר"ל היום עד שהוא כתר בשמים ובמקום שהיהודים עושים ראש השנה תעשו לזכרון **אשבליתא דצליבא** ר"ל הוא היום שמצאו אותו העץ שנתלו לישו עליו ובמקום שיהודים עושים יום כפורים תעשו לזכרון יום גזרות ישו ר"ל הוא היום שמלו ליש"ו ובמקו' שהיהודי עושים חנוכה תעשו לזכרון **יומא די דינא** ר"ל יום שהביאו לישו למשפט

JTS2343 (Late Yemeni A)[32]
ועשו בשביל פסח של ישראל עשו אתם **עדה דקיימתא** נועד פסח שעמד מקברו ובשביל **עצרתא סליק** ובו עלה לשמים ובשביל ראש השנה ובשביל **אשכבתא דכליבא** והוא יום שמצאו בו עץ שנתלה בו עליו ובשביל **עצרתא רבא גזורתא** ובשביל חנוכה **כאולדא** יום דלידה אך לא **ערלתא ולא גזורתא מידי**

Benayahu25 (Late Oriental)[33]
ועשו במקום ראש השנה **אשכביתא דליבא** ותחת כפור עשו **צומא רבא גזר דינא** ותחת חנוכה **בלשתא**

Like in the previous case of Aramaic, this section is also sometimes preserved in Hebrew. This is the case in various manuscripts of the Wagenseil recension.[34] Notably, however, these Hebrew parallels do not translate the Aramaic names but omit them and retain only descriptions of the Christian festivals.[35]

In contradistinction to the Burial plot element, these festival names are not explicitly labeled Aramaic. However, they are followed in all versions by explications in Hebrew of the event remembered in the respective festival, which makes their

[30] On the manuscript see above. See Meerson – Schäfer 2014, 2: 94 for the text.

[31] Universiteitsbibliotheek Amsterdam – Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Hs. Ros. 414, 18th–19th century, Italian semi-cursive. See Meerson – Schäfer 2014, 2: 2 (manuscript), 111 (text).

[32] On the manuscript see above. See Meerson – Schäfer 2014, 2: 122 for the text.

[33] Jerusalem – Benayahu Collection, ms. 25.4, 19th century, Oriental semi-cursive. See Meerson – Schäfer 2014, 2: 9 (manuscript), 135 (text).

[34] *Ibid.*, 1: 106.

[35] E.g., *ibid.*, 2: 235-236 (texts).

interpretation as Aramaic loanwords unlikely. The names were clearly perceived of as being in a language other than Hebrew. The manuscripts differ in the number of Aramaic festival names they contain and evince variant readings for some of the names.[36] Naturally, the Aramaic names of Jewish festivals show no variation because they were readily understandable to the copying scribes. These are עצרתא 'Shavuot' (Strasb3974; JTS2343) and צומא רבא 'Day of Atonement' (Strasb3974; Benayahu25; JTS2343 erroneously עצרתא רבא). Krauß and Stökl Ben Ezra both contributed to establishing the Aramaic names of the Christian festivals, most of which were corrupted at least in some of the manuscripts. Two are easily identifiable: עדה דקיימתא (Strasb3974; JTS2343) faithfully reflects the Syriac name for Easter ܥܝܕܐ ܕܩܝܡܬܐ, literally 'festival of the resurrection',[37] and סולקא (Strasb3974; Amst414) is Syriac ܣܘܠܩܢܐ 'Ascension'.[38]

The next case is more complicated. Krauß suggested that אשכבתא דצליבא (thus in the least corrupted version of Strasb3974) is best emended to אשכחתא דצליבא,[39] which is the Syriac ܡܫܟܚܬܐ ܕܨܠܝܒܐ, literally 'finding of the Cross'. Stökl Ben Ezra noted that while the name apparently points to the Inventio Crucis (which is celebrated in May), the equation with the Jewish New Year holiday suggests a date in autumn. Consequently, he proposed that the name in *Toledot Yeshu* refers to the Exaltatio Crucis celebrated on September 14.[40] This can also be corroborated from the Syriac side, since the name ܡܫܟܚܬܐ ܕܨܠܝܒܐ is indeed one of the designations of Exaltatio Crucis.[41]

Another problematic name is גזורתא (Strasb3974; JTS2343), which is said to correspond to the Day of Atonement. Prima facie,

[36] Cf. the overview in *ibid.*, 1: 105-106.

[37] Hence, *pace* Krauß 1933, 46-47 and Stökl Ben Ezra 2009, 487, there is no need for favoring the reading מועדה דקיימתא.

[38] Sokoloff 2009, 980.

[39] Krauß 1933, 47.

[40] Stökl Ben Ezra 2009, 489.

[41] E.g., in some of the Syriac menologia published by Nau 1912, 86, 97, 124. What's more, a variant ܐܡܫܟܚܬܐ ܕܨܠܝܒܐ with initial *aleph*, as in *Toledot Yeshu*, is also attested, *ibid.*, 97.

the word means 'circumcision', and it would designate the festival of the Circumcision of Christ. However, since this festival is celebrated on January 1, it is not a good fit for the Day of Atonement, the Jewish holiday it purportedly replaces. Instead of assuming such a chronological mismatch in the list, Stökl Ben Ezra suggests to emend the form to גזירתא, which can be read as a transliteration of Syriac ܓܙܪܬܐ 'decree, indiction', i.e., Indiction Day, which was celebrated on September 1, and prior to the fifth century CE perhaps on September 23.[42] While this emended reading would solve the chronological mismatch in the list, the proposal has weaknesses. As Stökl Ben Ezra pointed out, ܓܙܪܬܐ is not the usual Syriac word for 'indiction', a Greek technical term (Ἰνδικτιών) that was loaned into Syriac and naturalized as ܐܢܕܝܟܛܝܘܢ (and similar).[43] It is, in fact, doubtful whether the sole occurrence of the term ܓܙܪܬܐ 'indictio' that is listed in Payne-Smith's *Thesaurus Syriacus* (Stökl Ben Ezra's source) can support the technical, calendrical meaning.[44] In addition, the Indiction Day would arguably have been a strange choice as a Christian equivalent for the Day of Atonement, at least if one assumes that the festival names were culled from a written source such as a menology. For the Indiction Day is not recorded in such calendrical lists, in contradistinction to another prominent festival on September 23, that of the Conception of John the Baptist.[45] Had the Jewish compiler of the list drawn his knowledge of Christian festivals from a Syriac menology, rather than from real-life acquaintance with the celebrations of his Christian neighbors, he would probably have chosen the latter over the former. Ultimately, however, the uncertainties remain, as it is impossible to establish the original reading and identify with certainty the festival it designated. A calendrical mismatch between the Circumcision of Christ and the Day of Atonement cannot be excluded, especially

[42] Stökl Ben Ezra 2009, 490. For a recent overview of the discussion and evidence for Indiction Day on September 23, cf., e.g., Mosshammer 2008, 22–24.

[43] Stökl Ben Ezra 2009, 490 n. 57; Sokoloff 2009, 59.

[44] Payne-Smith 1879–1901, 1: 701.

[45] Cf. Nau 1912, 86: ܒܫܘܪܝܐ ܕܙܟܪܝܐ ܥܠ ܝܘܚܢܢ ܡܥܡܕܢܐ 'the Annunciation of Zakaria concerning John the Baptist'. Also, *ibid.*, 124-125.

because both share the common denominator of following another major holiday by eight or nine days.[46]

The last holiday in the list, the equivalent of Hanukkah, is easy to identify: קלנדא 'Calends' (Strasb3974).[47] This festival is an outlier in the list because it is pagan, not Christian. This fact combined with the form of the name – קלנדא as in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic rather than the Syriac ܩܠܢܕܐ or ܩܠܝܢܕܐ – [48] suggests that it was not part of a Syriac source of the list (if there ever was such a thing). The Hanukkah-Calends equation is probably a secondary expansion that draws on a similar equation in the Babylonian Talmud.[49] In Strasb3794 and JTS2343, there follows another phrase in Aramaic: אף לא ערליתא מדי אף לא מדי [ ] גזורתא «Neither the foreskin nor the circumcision are a thing (viz., mean anything).» The wording is dependent on 1 Cor. 7:19,[50] but none of the forms are distinctly Syriac, and מדי is clearly Jewish Babylonian Aramaic.[51] This sentence is independent of the festival list micro-form.

To sum up: in contradistinction to the gibberish in the Burial account, the festival names and one additional phrase in the First Separation plot element are authentic Aramaic. Four of the Christian festival names correspond to known Syriac names: עדה דקיימתא 'Festival of Resurrection', סולקא 'Ascension', אשכחתא דצליבא 'Exaltatio Crucis', and גזורתא 'Circumcision of Christ'.[52] However, the last festival name, קלנדא 'Calends', and the following

[46] Meerson – Schäfer 2014, 1: 108.

[47] בלשתא (Benayahu25) is probably a corruption of this name, *pace* Meerson – Schäfer 2014, 1: 231 n. 46, who tentatively consider a fanciful pun.

[48] Sokoloff 2002, 1021; Sokoloff 2009, 1307.

[49] Meerson - Schäfer 2014, 1: 108.

[50] *Ibid.*, 1: 181 n. 54.

[51] Sokoloff 2002, 663 s.v. מידא.

[52] It does not come as a surprise that these names are unattested in Jewish Aramaic or Mandaic texts (and dictionaries). However, the classification as Syriac is not based on attestation of the lexemes alone. For two of the festivals, the corresponding Christian Palestinian Aramaic names are known, דיסבאדיא 'Festival of Resurrection' and סלסם 'Ascension' (Sokoloff 2014, 288, 371), and the names in *Toledot Yeshu* align with the Syriac forms rather than the Christian Palestinian ones.

phrase display lexical affinities with Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, not Syriac. In the following section, I shall advance a hypothesis as to the growth of this literary unit.

2.3 A Hypothesis About the Genesis of the List with Aramaic Festival Names

My findings above validate previous suggestions that the Aramaic festival names are genuine and testify to knowledge of Syriac on the part of the Jewish scribe(s) who incorporated the festival list micro-form into *Toledot Yeshu*. However, the fact that the names are Syriac does not imply that the whole literary unit goes back to a Syriac Vorlage, or to any Vorlage at that.[53] Perhaps a Jewish scribe who was aware of the genuine Syriac names employed them as one-word code switches in the equations that he himself created for this specific section of the Helene recension. The use of צומא רבא for the Day of Atonement would probably at least have necessitated an explanation in a Syriac context, in which Christian readers would have understood the noun phrase as referring to Lent.

Be that as it may, it is clear that the festival list micro-form is an interpolation and was not originally part of the Helene recension. Meerson and Schäfer had reached this conclusion based on the manuscript evidence of the Hebrew *Toledot Yeshu* alone (which is late, from the 17th to 19th centuries),[54] and it is now also borne out by one of the earliest witnesses to the Helene recension, a Judeo-Arabic fragment from the 14th or 15th century.[55] This early Arabic witness to the First Separation plot element contains the Sabbath-Sunday equation that precedes the festival list micro-form in the Hebrew version, as well as the reference to the non-obligatory nature of the circumcision that succeeds it. All of this suggests that the festival list micro-form is a late addition to the Hebrew version of the Helene recension. Presumably, a copyist saw the original Sabbath-Sunday equation as an opportunity to enhance the text by adding more examples of corresponding Jewish and Christian

[53] E.g., Stökl Ben Ezra 2009, 493.
[54] Meerson – Schäfer 2014, 1: 108.
[55] Goldstein 2023, 87-88.

festivals. Since he used authentic Syriac festival names in his equations, we may assume that he was working in the Near East rather than in Europe – where knowledge of Syriac among Jewish scribes would have been virtually nonexistent, and even in the rare cases we know about, was restricted to written texts (and probably even to transliterated Syriac texts in square script).[56] It is more likely that the micro-form originated with a Jewish scribe in the medieval Near East who was acquainted with Christian festival names in Syriac and their approximate dates through contact with Christians in his immediate environment, i.e., not necessarily and not primarily through written sources.

Understanding the festival list micro-form as the work of a Jewish scribe also accounts for the inclusion of the Hanukkah-Calends equation, which does not make sense in a Syriac Christian context but rather draws on Talmudic literature. And last but not least, the hypothesis also provides us with an explanation for the use of Aramaic, not Hebrew, for the names. Naturally, the Jewish scribe would have known the Christian festival names only in Aramaic (and perhaps also in vernacular Arabic), but not in Hebrew. The use of Aramaic for the corresponding Jewish festival names can then be explained by attraction.[57]

3. Conclusion

In this paper, I reassessed the Aramaic words and phrases that appear in some manuscripts of the Hebrew Helene recension of *Toledot Yeshu*. The results are mixed. The reported speech in the Burial plot element does not constitute genuine Aramaic, even though it is explicitly labelled as such. As far as I can tell, the respective words are gibberish. However, these negative results have no implications for assessing the Aramaic festival names in the First Separation plot element, for the latter is textually independent from

[56] For on overview on the use and knowledge of Syriac among Jewish scribes cf. Stadel 2020, 282-287.

[57] Perhaps this is also true for the phrases about circumcision, which, however, are only loosely connected to the festival equations (i.e., by also juxtaposing Jewish and Christian customs).

the former. In this second case, I could confirm the somewhat surprising findings from previous studies. The festival list micro-form contains four authentic Syriac Christian festival names. I propose that this micro-form constitutes a late interpolation into the Helene recension, which probably originated with a Jewish scribe from the medieval Near East who had first-hand knowledge of the festival names and dates from his Christian neighbors.

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An Inscribed Ostracon from the City of Sumhuram, Dhofar (Sultanate of Oman)

SILVIA LISCHI - ENRICO MORANO - MARCO MORIGGI[1]

The contribution features the *editio princeps* of an inscribed ostracon found during the excavations of the site of the ancient city of Sumhuram (Dhofar, Oman). A preliminary transliteration and translation of the Parthian text are offered, together with a description of the context where the ostracon came to light.

Keywords: Oman – Dhofar – Parthian inscriptions – Aramaic script

1. The archaeological evidence

The artefact in question is a fragment of pottery with a painted inscription on one end, discovered during the last research activities conducted in the port city of Sumhuram in 2019 by the

[1] Silvia Lischi is responsible for § 1; Marco Moriggi is responsible for § 1.1; Enrico Morano and Marco Moriggi are jointly responsible for §§ 2., 2.1-2.2. The authors would like to express their deepest gratitude to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism of the Sultanate of Oman and the Museum of the Frankincense Land, for their generous provision of long-term research permission and access to the materials discussed in this paper. This invaluable support in favour of archaeological investigations in Dhofar over the years has been essential for the DHOMIAP project. Marco Moriggi is grateful to Fabrizio A. Pennacchietti (Torino), Siam Bhayro and Anne Burberry (Exeter) for precious suggestions and insightful comments. Any misreading remains in the authors' full responsibility.

Italian Mission to Oman (IMTO).[2] Although its discovery during cleaning activities precludes a precise stratigraphic attribution, it enables identification of its area of origin: the north-western section of the city. This area, characterised by a number of cultic structures alongside residential buildings, is notable for revealing the phases associated with the earliest occupation of the city. The city was in use between the early 2nd century BCE and the 3rd century CE. Evidence of activity persisted into the 4th and 5th centuries CE, albeit increasingly sporadic and confined to specific parts of the city.[3]

Recent investigations in the area have further enriched our understanding of Sumhuram's role within the trade networks of the region. While its importance in Indo-Roman trade activities during the Late Iron Age (1st century BCE - 3rd century CE) is well established, it has only recently begun to be contextualised within a wider system of trade and settlement dynamics. This system involved not only South Arabians, but also newly identified indigenous communities in Dhofar.[4]

The fragment was found, as mentioned above, in the north-western area of Sumhuram, which corresponds mainly to Area F. The levels of the city that were being studied at the time of the discovery relate to the period between the 1st century BCE and 1st century CE. This date can be proposed on the basis of the materials found and comparison with other contexts with similar assemblages. These contexts are generally characterised by a high quantity of imported materials, mainly pottery, the predominant classes of which are Dressel 2-4 amphorae, Indian cooking pots, and torpedo jars from the Arabian-Persian Gulf.[5]

On the other hand, there is no information on the functional context in which the fragment was found, due to the lack of further excavations in the area. Nevertheless, it is possible to state that Area F contains the main temple of the city, the Temple of

[2] Avanzini 2002; Avanzini 2008; Buffa 2019.
[3] Avanzini 2008.
[4] Lischi 2019; Lischi 2023.
[5] Pavan 2017; Lischi et al. 2020.

Sin;[6] the Shrine;[7] and the Monumental Building 2,[8] one of the most enigmatic structures of the city. For this reason, it is considered the city's religious quarter, although there is no shortage of residential and commercial buildings.[9]

The ceramic fragment measures approximately 23 cm in length and varies in width. Unfortunately, the narrowest part, which bears a painted inscription, has sustained a fracture that has partially compromised the legibility of the text (see following paragraphs).

Due to the current state of preservation of the fragment, no definitive typological identification can be made, as no diagnostic features are present. However, the presence of a surface treatment that makes the colour of the surface lighter than that of the fabric is discernible, and the curvature of the wider part suggests that the fragment came from a large container, probably used for transport and storage.



Front view and section of the ostracon found in the city of Sumhuram. © Museum of Frankincense Land of Salalah.

[6] Sedov 2008, 183-213.
[7] Pavan – Degli Esposti 2016.
[8] Lischi 2014.
[9] Buffa 2019.

1.1 The inscription

Before presenting the reading of the inscription painted on the ostracon dealt with here, it is worth remembering that we decided to publish this short text keeping in mind that

> epigraphists are understandably reluctant to publish inscriptions that they cannot read. Yet since the quickest way to a reading of a difficult inscription is to show it to as many specialists as possible, it is obvious that this attitude is obscurantist.[10]

We thus think that, even if this ostracon has proved to be difficult to read and the reading is far from definitive, it needs to be made public.

The inscription occupies just the lower half of the pottery fragment. It looks as if the original ostracon was broken on the right edge after writing was added. The same might apply to the left edge, even though this is not clearly detectable in the picture at our disposal.

The text is arranged into two lines. In the first line, the ink – or whatever kind of colouring liquid was used – has faded and the letters are obliterated in part by a greyish patina. In the second line, the signs are clearer and the ink is darker than in the first line. The writing tool might have been re-shaped and re-inked after the inscribing of the first line.

The script used on the ostracon is to be identified with the Aramaic script used in the 3rd parchment of Avroman (dated 53 CE), the Nisa ostraca (1st century BCE) and the inscription in Parthian language carved on the statue of Heracles from Seleucia-on-the-Tigris (mid-2nd century CE). The dating of the script thus matches perfectly with the time-span suggested by the archaeological evidence.[11] This variety of Aramaic script was used

[10] Fuller – Bivar 1996, 30.

[11] For the 3rd parchment of Avroman, see Weber 2010. The ostraca from Nisa used for comparison in this study are edited in Diakonoff – Livshits 2001, where further bibliography is found. The *editio princeps* of the inscriptions on the

to write documents in the Parthian language during the Arsacid empire (mid-3rd century BCE–mid-3rd century CE).[12]

2. Transliteration, translation, notes to the text[13]

1	*[...MN] KRMʾ* *(r/k)wdb(š)*	[...]from the vineyard of (...)
2	*[...]ʾwʾ O II / [...]III II O II*	[...]ʾwʾ . 2 / [...]5 . 2

2.1 The text

In the first line, only one word, *KRMʾ* 'vineyard', can be read with a good degree of probability. This word appears several times in the Nisa ostraca as an Aramaic logogram in the phrase *MN KRMʾ*, followed by the name of a wine factor or a toponym.[14]

The second line displays several issues in both reading and translation. In the transcription and interpretation of the letters, two possible readings can be offered. In the first one, the signs on the ostracon could be read as *[...]ʾwʾ*, perhaps the final part of a proper name or toponym, followed by a punctuation mark (O, see below), and number 2. In the second reading, the same signs could alternatively be interpreted as digits: *III II O II* '5 . 2'. As for the sign O (), the most probable solution would be to interpret

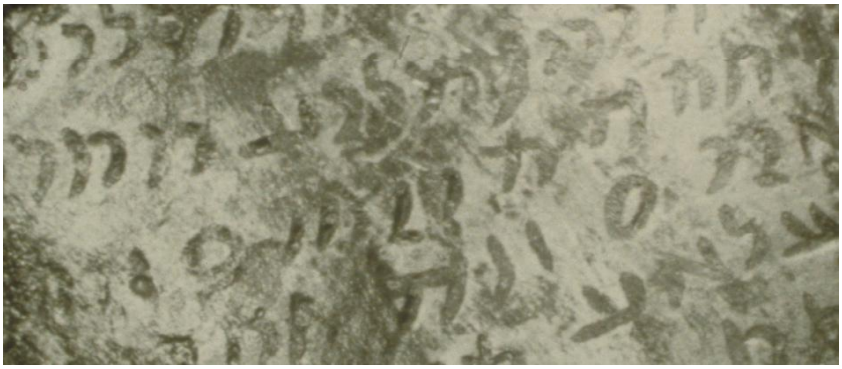
Heracles from Seleucia is featured in al-Salihi 1984, shortly followed by Pennacchietti 1987. On the latter text, see also Invernizzi 1989; Morano 1990.

[12] The principle ruling the use of Aramaic scripts for Iranian languages is the principle of heterography, i.e. the scribe writes down an Aramaic word in Aramaic script but, when reading it, he reads it as an Iranian equivalent. Even though Iranian words increasingly entered the texts over the centuries, heterography continued to be employed for a long time. Aramaic words in fact became similar to lologrames in the long run and, during the Sasanian era (after the first quarter of the 3rd century CE), they were flanked by components of Iranian morphology in phonetic script.

[13] Legenda: [.] = one missing letter; [..] = two missing letters; [...] = three or more missing letters; [x] = restored letter; x/y = alternative reading or translation; (x) = uncertain letter; (...) = meaningless sequence; *xxx* = transliteration. Aramaic lologrames are in capital letters. Digits in the transliteration are displayed as Roman numbers.

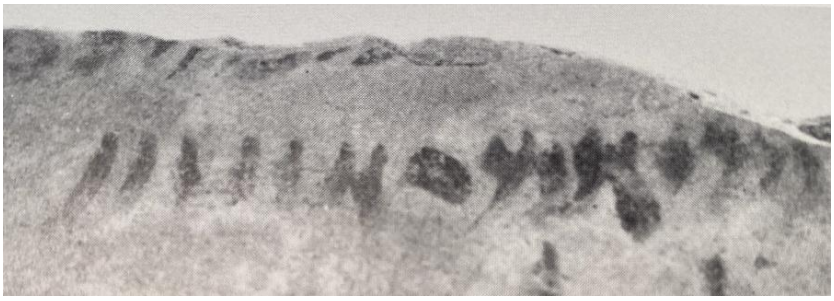
[14] See Diakonoff – Livshits 2001, 81.

it as a punctuation mark, or an abbreviation for 'and', as it appears in lines 7 and 8 of the Parthian text on the Heracles from Seleucia.[15]



A detail of the Parthian inscription on the Heracles from Seleucia displaying the sign O. Modified and reworked picture from Pennacchietti 1987, pl. 66.

A third hypothesis may be set forth. Given the position of the digits, one can guess that the sign O corresponds to the digit for 10, often occurring in the Nisa ostraca. See ostracon no. 1519, l. 2, which reads: *Ḥm X III III I* '17 mari of wine'.[16]



A detail of the Parthian inscription on the Nisa ostracon no. 1519, l. 2. Modified and reworked picture from Diakonoff – Livshits – MacKenzie 1998, pl. 583.

[15] See Pennacchietti 1987, 175. The reading by Pennacchietti is confirmed by the interlinear edition featured in Morano 1990: 231, where the Parthian sign corresponds to '*και*' in the Greek version.

[16] Diakonoff – Livshits – Mackenzie 1998, pl. 583.

In this case, the second line should be transliterated as *[...]ʾwʾ X II* and thus translated as '12 *[...]ʾwʾ of [...]*', where the incomplete, unknown word *[...]ʾwʾ* represents a unit of measurement.

2.2 The script

The letters with most relevant diagnostic value in our text are:[17]

- *d* > this letter finds its closest parallels in the d of the statue of Heracles from Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, especially as regards the lower stroke, pointing right at the bottom of the sign.
- *k* > the sign displays close similarities with the ones on the Nisa ostraca and the 3rd parchment of Avroman.
- *m* > both the 3rd parchment of Avroman and the Nisa ostraca display the letter as we see it on our specimen.

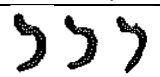
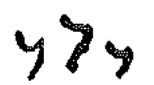
	3rd parchment Avroman	Nisa ostraca	Heracles from Seleucia
d			
k			
m			
r			

Table of scripts

[17] Palaeographical comparison with the 3rd parchment of Avroman and the Nisa ostraca is based upon the script-tables featured in Klugkist 1982, 159, fig. 66; 181, fig. 71. For the Heracles from Seleucia, the drawing included in Pennacchietti 1987, 173, fig. B, was used. The table of scripts at the end of this article displays just some of the forms of the letters in the referred documents.



Ostracon from Sumhuram. © Museum of Frankincense Land of Salalah.

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Quelques remarques sur l'orthographe de plusieurs noms propres en araméen christo-palestinien

ALAIN J. DESREUMAUX

This paper offers an analysis of some names and toponyms from the New Testament versions in Christian Palestinian Aramaic (CPA) according to ancient and medieval manuscripts. It follows the changes in transcription in CPA, in comparison with Syriac and examines the rendition of some Greek consonants such as Greek κ, χ and π. Against some previously established convictions about the lack of consistency in the consonantal transcriptions, this paper proves that CPA was extremely consistent in its renditions of Greek letters and names.

Keywords: Christian Palestinian Aramaic – proper names – Greek Gospels – Syriac Gospels – textual variants

Quand l'orientaliste de Copenhague Jacob Georg Christian Adler publie en 1789 son *Novi Testamenti versionis syriacae, simplex Philoxeniana et Hierosolymitana*, il essaie de situer l'écriture et la langue du lectionnaire des Évangiles du manuscrit Vatican, sir. 19 par rapport aux versions syriaques connues – la Pshitta et la Philoxénienne – et voit en ce codex daté de 1034 ap. J.-C. le représentant d'une version syriaque hiérosolymitaine des Évangiles, dans un dialecte aux nombreuses particularités lexicales repérées dans le texte. Il énumère les nombreuses formes empruntées au grec d'une part, à ce qu'il nomme le « chaldéen » de l'autre – c'est-à-dire en fait au judéo-araméen – en procédant à des centaines de comparaisons textuelles dans les Évangiles selon Matthieu et selon Marc. À l'époque où l'on

commence à découvrir l'existence[1] de ce qu'aujourd'hui on reconnaît comme un dialecte araméen des habitants d'une région particulière du Levant chrétien entre le Ve et le XIIIe siècle – en gros ceux des provinces romano-byzantines des trois Palestines, de l'Arabie et du sud-ouest de la Phénicie –[2] on n'avait guère d'autre critère de classification d'un tel évangéliaire que celui des textes syriaques. Cependant, la distance avec eux est telle que le lecteur en était étonné et Adler l'exprime crûment :

> Il ressort clairement de ces spécimens que le dialecte est désordonné et maladroit, ressemblant plus au chaldéen qu'au syrien ; son orthographe est vague, incohérente, arbitraire et, réécrite et corrigée par un copiste inexpérimenté, rendue encore plus embrouillée.[3]

Il est vrai que, lorsque, du fait de la ressemblance de l'écriture, on s'attend à lire du syriaque, on peut être décontenancé par les différences orthographiques que les manuscrits christo-palestiniens présentent dans des mots par rapport à des mots syriaques semblables à l'impeccable graphie, surtout lorsqu'on constate, en outre, que dans un même texte christo-palestinien, le même mot peut varier dans sa graphie. Dans cette optique, il m'a paru intéressant d'examiner précisément quelques anthroponymes courants et même célèbres pour livrer leurs variations lexicales à la sagacité du grand philologue qu'est Ricardo Contini, en hommage d'amitié et d'admiration pour son œuvre académique à la constante rigueur.

Au début du XXe siècle, Francis Crawford Burkitt avait fait une étude détaillée de la manière dont les noms du Nouveau Testament grec étaient traduits en syriaque.[4] Je suggérerai ici quelques prolongations, la manière dont les noms grecs sont

[1] S. E. & J. S. Assemani inventorient le ms. Vatican sir. 19 dans leur *Catalogue* de 1758. Adler en fait une description en 1781.

[2] Voir Desreumaux 2022, 36-54.

[3] *Satis constat ex his speciminibus, dialectum esse incultam, et inconcinnam chaldaicae similiorem quam syriacae; orthographiam autem vagam, inconstantem, arbitrarium, et ab imperito librario rescribendo et corrigendo denuo impeditam* (Adler 1789, 149).

[4] Burkitt 1912.

traduits ou transcrits dans les versions syriaques et christo-palestiniennes du Nouveau Testament pouvant donner des indications sur les différences entre ces deux dialectes araméens et leur position dans le monde grec.

1. Le cas de Simon Pierre

Ainsi, le cas de Simon Pierre nous paraît intéressant car il semble significatif de l'un des aspects du paysage linguistique palestinien au moment de l'écriture du Nouveau Testament dans ses différentes recensions et dans leurs traductions en monde syriaque d'une part et dans les communautés araméennes christo-palestiniennes d'autre part.

1.1 Le nom Simon

Dans le Nouveau Testament, douze personnages portent le nom hébreu שִׁמְעוֹן, *Šimʿon*, que le grec transcrit, pour certains, Συμεών, *Symeôn* : le vieillard qui accueille l'enfant Jésus (Lc 2, 25.34), l'ancêtre dans la généalogie de Joseph (Lc 2, 30), Syméon Niger d'Antioche (Ac 13, 1) et Syméon de l'assemblée de Jérusalem (Ac 15, 14, peut-être le corroyeur hôte de Paul ?). Que ce soit dans la Vetus Syra et l'Harqléenne pour les deux premiers ou la Pshitta pour les quatre, Συμεών est transcrit ܫܡܥܘܢ, *Šmʿwn* qui est évidemment la forme sémitique conforme à l'hébreu. Les lectionnaires médiévaux des Évangiles christo-palestiniens du Sinaï[5] transcrivent de même le nom des deux premiers[6] par la même forme sémitique ܫܡܥܘܢ, *Šmʿwn*. Cela est à remarquer, car il en va différemment des transcriptions du nom des huit autres personnages du Nouveau Testament portant le nom de Simon

[5] Publiés par Lewis – Gibson 1899, les lectionnaires A, B et C sont datés respectivement de 1030, 1104 et 1118 ap. J.-C. Je citerai en outre les fragments M41 et M42 du nouveau fonds, restes de lectionnaires médiévaux datables du XII[e] (et peut-être XIII[e] ?) siècle, que j'ai pu lire dans la bibliothèque de Sainte-Catherine, grâce à l'accueil de S.E. Mgr Damianos et du Père Justin ; ils sont en cours de publication.

[6] Lewis – Gibson 1899, 272-273 et 262.

sous la forme grecque Σίμων.[7] En effet, si les transcriptions des noms de ces huit personnages dans la Vetus Syra et dans la Pshitta sont à l'unisson en donnant la même forme sémitique ܫܡܥܘܢ, toutes celles du christo-palestinien sont transcrites du grec Σίμων sous la forme ܣܝܡܘܢ, *Sym(y)on* : Simon le Cananéen (Mt 10, 4 ; Mc 3, 18) ou le Zélote (Lc 6, 15) ; Simon, l'un des frères de Jésus (Mt 13, 55 ; Mc 6, 3) ; Simon le lépreux (Mt 26, 6 ; Mc 14, 3) ; Simon de Cyrène (Mt 27, 32 ; Mc 15, 21) ; Simon le pharisien (Lc 7, 40.43.44) ; Simon le père de Judas Iscariote (Jn 13, 26) ;[8] Simon le corroyeur (Ac 10, 32)[9] et, le plus cité, l'apôtre Simon Pierre dans les 29 occurrences conservées (que nous traitons ci-après), mais aussi dans la traduction de Σίμων Πέτρος par ܣܝܡܘܢ ܟܐܦܐ, *Symwn Ptrws* en 2Pi 1, 1.[10] Toutes celles-là correspondent bien à la pratique habituelle du christo-palestinien de calquer le grec, avec quelques variantes vocaliques. On constate donc que la dérogation à cette règle concerne la transcription de la forme minoritaire Συμεών qui semble correspondre à ce que le christo-palestinien ressent comme personnages du monde sémitique – le vieillard Syméon et l'ancêtre de la lignée de Joseph – tandis que pour tous les autres, qui sont écrits Σίμων, il en décalque le nom sous les formes ܣܡܘܢ *Symon* et ܣܝܡܘܢ *Symyon* comme appartenant au monde du Nouveau Testament grec.

1.2 Le décalque christo-palestinien du nom Σίμων

Ainsi, sur les quarante-trois occurrences conservées de ce nom,[11] la plupart sont transcrits ܣܡܘܢ, *Symwn*, ce qui représente véritablement une translittération. Toutefois, dans quatre

[7] On ne possède pas de texte araméen christo-palestinien pour Simon le magicien (*Ac* 8, 9.13.18).

[8] On ne possède pas de texte christo-palestinien pour *Jn* 6, 71 ni 13, 2.

[9] On ne possède pas de texte christo-palestinien pour Ac 9, 43 ni 10, 6.7.

[10] Nestle-Aland 2012, 708 édite Συμεὼν Πέτρος et l'apparat ne signale pas de variante ; cependant, Lewis 1909, 187 signale la variante Σίμον comme étant de « B 5 13 etc. », c'est-à-dire, si je comprends bien, du Vaticanus, du Pap. 5, du Pap. 13.

[11] Rappelons que la documentation araméenne christo-palestinienne est encore lacunaire : on ne peut pas lire l'intégralité du Nouveau Testament en cette langue.

occurrences, la graphie en est un peu différente. En Mt 10, 4, le lectionnaire palimpseste du Sinaï (VIe siècle ?)[12] l'écrit ܣܡܝܢ, *Symn* alors que les lectionnaires médiévaux A, B et C l'écriront ܣܡܘܢ. En Mc 3, 18 et en Lc 6, 15, le lectionnaire médiéval M42 l'écrit ܣܡܘܝܢ, *Symywn* comme en Lc 7, 40 dans les lectionnaires A, B et C. Cette deuxième graphie, rare, qui ne se trouve que dans les lectionnaires médiévaux du Sinaï correspond certainement à une *scriptio plena* d'une graphie entendue Συμεών, la voyelle Y transcrivant le *upsilon* et l'*epsilon*. La seule variante qu'on ne s'explique pas est celle du lectionnaire médiéval B en Mt 26, 6 qui écrit ܣܡܝܢ, *Symyn* là où A et C écrivent la forme majoritaire ܣܡܘܢ ; on ne peut exclure une faute de copie. Toutefois, ce peut-être aussi une forme normale où le vocalisme /o/ n'est pas noté, comme les diminutifs neutres en -ion (cf. plus bas le cas de κιβύτον transcrit *qybwtyn*).[13]

1.2 Les Simon

Le cas de l'apôtre Simon Pierre offre matière à réflexion sur la manière dont il est cité dans les textes, et surtout sur les rapports entre le grec et le monde sémitique à travers les versions. Dans l'équipe des douze, les deux apôtres nommés Simon se différenciaient, l'un par son surnom « Simon le Cananéen », Σίμων κανανᾶιος (Mt 10, 4 ; Mc 3, 18) que le christo-palestinien transcrit parfaitement ܣܡܘܢ ܩܢܝܐ, *Symwn qnnyʾ* ; l'autre par sa filiation. Ce dernier, qui sera déclaré Pierre par Jésus, est appelé en Jn 1, 42 Σίμων ὁ υἱὸς Ἰωάννου ou encore en Jn 21, 15-17 Σίμων Ἰωάννου selon la recension alexandrine et les manuscrits les plus anciens tandis qu'en Mt 16, 17 il est appelé Σίμων Βαριωνᾶ selon la recension byzantine et la variante Σίμων Βὰρ Ἰωνᾶ des manuscrits des IXe-Xe siècles (notamment Γ, f^13^, 565, 700, 892, 1424) ; celle-ci d'ailleurs présente massivement en Jn 1, 42 la variante Σίμων ὁ υἱὸς Ἰωna et, en Jn 21, 15-17, la variante Σίμων Ἰωνᾶ.

[12] F. 62va. Encore en cours d'édition ; j'en donne ici mes lectures ; voir Desreumaux 2023.

[13] Je remercie vivement Laurent Capron qui m'a fait part de sa remarque fort pertinente à ce sujet. Par ailleurs, il m'a permis d'éliminer plusieurs erreurs.

Cette tradition est suivie un peu différemment par les versions syriaques : en Mt 16, 17 ܫܡܥܘܢ ܒܪ ܝܘܢܐ pour la Vetus Syra et la Pshitta ; ܫܡܥܘܢ ܒܪ ܝܘܢܐ pour l'Harqléenne ; en Jn 1, 42 ܫܡܥܘܢ ܒܪ ܝܘܢܐ également pour la Vetus Syra, la Pshitta et l'Harqléenne ; en Jn 21, 17 ܫܡܥܘܢ ܒܪ ܝܘܢܐ pour la Vetus Syra, ܫܡܥܘܢ ܒܪ ܝܘܢܐ pour la Pshitta et ܫܡܥܘܢ ܒܪ ܝܘܢܐ pour l'Harqléenne. Les lectionnaires christo-palestiniens médiévaux A, B et C[14] eux, portent partout la même dénomination explicitant la filiation : ܫܡܥܘܢ ܒܪ ܝܘܢܐ – unanimes sous cette forme qui traduit donc avec constance la leçon Σίμων Βὰρ Ἰωνᾶ, celle des manuscrits des IX[e]-X[e] siècles de la recension byzantine. Toutefois, tout en restant dans la transmission de la leçon du texte byzantin, les trois lectionnaires varient dans le verset de Jn 1, 42 : « fils de Iona » y est écrit ܒܪܗ ܕܝܘܢܐ, *brh d-ywn'* par A, ܒܪܝܘܢܐ, *bryh ywn'* par B et ܒܪ ܝܘܢܐ, *br ywn'* par C. La forme de A est une traduction, celle de B également, mais en omettant la préposition, et celle de C semble plutôt une transcription. La différence de graphie entre la forme de A et celle de B relève d'une part de la liberté d'écriture des voyelles – fréquente en christo-palestinien – et d'autre part d'une double tournure possible de l'annexion.

1.4 Simon bar Iona appelé Pierre et Céphas

Dans l'Évangile selon Matthieu, le choix de Jésus (Mt 16, 16)[15] fait « qu'on l'appelle Pierre » (Mt 4, 18 ; 10, 2, etc.), en grec Πέτρος, nom qui traduit parfaitement le mot araméen כאפא, *kefa* désignant la pierre, le roc, le rocher. Le verset du Nouveau Testament qui indique clairement la relation entre les quatre noms est précisément celui de Jn 1, 42 : « Tu es Simon, fils de Iona, tu seras appelé Κήφᾶς qui se traduit Πέτρος ».

En ce qui concerne les versions syriaques de ce verset, Burkitt a clairement exprimé qu'il était normal que dans le verset syriaque

[14] *Mt* 16, 17 (Lewis – Gibson 1899, 287) ; *Jn* 21, 15.16.17 (*Ibid.*, 226) ; toutefois en *Jn* 21, C omet la troisième adresse de Jésus, celle du v. 17.

[15] La raison en doit être idéologique puisque ce Simon comme vu plus haut portait déjà le patronyme araméen *Bar Iona*, littéralement « Fils de Colombe » qui permettait de le distinguer de l'autre apôtre Simon dit le Cananéen.

de la Pshitta, Κήφᾶς fût rendu par le mot ܟܐܦܐ avec une initiale K alors que, par ailleurs, le nom Καιάφας / Καϊφας était rendu par le syriaque ܩܝܦܐ avec une initiale Q : il l'explique tout simplement par le fait que ܟܐܦܐ n'est pas une transcription, mais une véritable traduction.[16] Le fait est évidemment inscrit dans la teneur même du verset et tant la Vetus Syra que l'Harqléenne font de même. D'ailleurs, la Pshitta manifeste clairement qu'il s'agit d'une traduction en omettant de traduire l'expression « ce qui se traduit Petros ». La Pshitta traduit de même par ܟܐܦܐ toutes les autres occurrences du nom Κήφᾶς.[17]

Il n'en va pas de même en christo-palestinien. Si les lectionnaires médiévaux A, B et C traduisent aussi Κήφᾶς par l'araméen ܟܐܦܐ dans le verset de Jn 1, 42, c'est aussi à cause de la teneur même du verset, mais dans les six autres occurrences conservées, il transcrit selon sa pratique habituelle en translittérant le grec, ce qui donne la graphie 𐤒𐤅𐤐𐤀𐤎, tant dans le CCR (Codex Climaci rescriptus) du Sinaï (période ancienne),[18] que dans le lectionnaire médiéval de Cambridge Westminster College[19] et le fragment de lectionnaire CPA Sp 6 du Sinaï.[20] Le nom Κήφᾶς emprunté par le grec à l'araméen vraisemblablement prononcé /kefa/ est devenu pour la version christo-palestinienne un nom grec qu'elle transcrit *qyfas*.

2. La question des transcriptions des phonèmes

2.1 La transcription de kappa

De fait, tous les mots grecs comportant un *kappa* sont normalement transcrits avec un 𐤒, *Q* en christo-palestinien. Notons plusieurs exemples de noms propres.

[16] Burkitt 1912, 5.

[17] *1Co* 1, 12 ; 3, 22 ; 9, 5 ; 15, 5 ; *Ga* 1, 18 ; 2, 9.11.14.

[18] *1 Co* 1, 12 (Lewis 1909, 116) ; *1 Co* 3, 22 (*Ibid.*, 118) ; *1 Co* 15, 5 (*Ibid.*, 128) ; *Ga* 1, 18 (*Ibid.,* 146).

[19] *1 Co* 15, 5 (Lewis 1897, 123).

[20] Brock 1995, 82-83 ; photo p. 287.

Καϊνάμ en Lc 3, 36-37 est transcrit ܩܢܝܢ, *qnyn* ;[21] toutefois, la vocalisation ne reproduit pas le mot grec.

Κανά en Jn 2, 1.11 ; 4, 46 ; 21, 2 est transcrit ܩܢ, *qnʾ* par les lectionnaires A, B et C, sauf par A qui transcrit ܩܢܬ, *qntʾ* en Jn 21, 2 ; en Jn 2, 1 on peut parler pour B de translittération avec ܩܢܩ, *qʾnʾ* où le ʾ translittère la voyelle grecque α.

Καίσαρ est constamment transcrit ܩܣܪ, *Qysr*, que ce soit dans les manuscrits de la période ancienne comme le CCR[22] ou l'évangéliaire palimpseste NF 56[23] ou dans les lectionnaires médiévaux A, B et C ;[24] une variante de vocalisation se présente dans la transcription de A, B et C en Lc 3, 1 et celle de A en Lc 2, 1 qui transcrivent ܩܣܪ, *Qsr*.

La transcription de Καισαρία est plus variable tout en conservant les mêmes consonnes de base. Elle a lieu sous cinq formes : dans le CCR, on trouve ܩܣܪܝܐ [25] et ܩܣܪܝܐ, *Qsryn*[26] et ܩܣܪܝܐ, *Qysryn*,[27] ces derniers avec la marque explicite du pluriel ; dans les lectionnaires A, B et C, on trouve également la forme ܩܣܪܝܐ, *Qysryn*,[28] mais aussi ܩܣܪܘܐ, *Qysrwn*.[29] Ces formes déconcertantes – elles ne transcrivent pas exactement celle du texte grec comme le christo-palestinien aurait pu le faire (par exemple, ܩܣܪܝܐ*, **Qysryʾ* comme l'arabe قيسارية) – sont en fait celles des désignations judéo-araméennes des deux villes appelées Césarée, l'une קיסרין, *Qysryn*, « Césarée maritime », l'autre קיסריון, *Qysrywn*, « Césarée de Philippe ».[30] Ne serait-ce pas ici que le christo-palestinien présente dans ses différentes occurrences de réelles variantes sur la localisation de la Césarée nommée ?

[21] Lewis 1899, 262 (lecture existant seulement dans le lectionnaire B).

[22] *Ac* 25, 8.10.11.12.21 ; 26, 32 (Lewis 1909, 90-96).

[23] *Mc* 12, 14.17 (Desreumaux 2022).

[24] *Mt* 22, 17.21 (Lewis 1899, 87) ; *Lc* 2, 1, lectionnaires B et C (*Ibid.*, 254) ; *Jn* 19, 12.15 (*Ibid.*, 196).

[25] *Ac* 25, 4.6 (Lewis 1909, 90).

[26] *Ac* 25, 1 (*Ibid.*, 90).

[27] Ac 21, 8 (*Ibid.*, 88) ; 21, 16 (Black 1939, 201 ; Duensing 1938, 45) ; 25, 13 (Lewis 1909, 90).

[28] *Mc* 8, 27 (Lewis 1899, 144).

[29] *Mt* 16, 13 (*Ibid.*, 286).

[30] Nombreuses références dans Krauss II 1899, 536-537.

La transcription du nom de la ville de Καφαρναούμ semble contredire la norme puisqu'elle est écrite avec un ܟ̄, *K* initial : ܟܦܪ ܢܚܘܡ, *kfrnḥwm* dans deux manuscrits de la période ancienne[31] et dans un verset des lectionnaires médiévaux A, B et C ; elle est écrite en deux mots dans les onze autres versets attestés des lectionnaires A, B et C ܟܦܪ ܢܚܘܡ, *kfr nḥwm*.[32] Cela s'explique aisément : il ne s'agit pas ici de transcription, mais de traduction qui considère la signification du toponyme, littéralement « Village de Naḥum », rétrotraduisant donc dans l'orthographe araméenne exacte ce que le grec avait transcrit dans sa propre graphie.

Le cas de Καϊάφας est significatif des équivoques possibles dans les transcriptions entre le grec et l'araméen. Transcrit unanimement et partout ܩܝܦܐ, *Qyf'* par la Vetus Syra, la Pshitta et l'Harqléenne, le nom du grand prêtre est parfois transcrit ܩܝܦܣ, *Qyfs* dans les lectionnaires médiévaux A et C en Lc 3, 2[33] et le lectionnaire C en Jn 18, 28,[34] donc de façon identique à la transcription de Κηφας dans toutes les occurrences en christo-palestinien comme nous l'avons vu ci-dessus ; seule la différence de vocalisation permet de les distinguer, *Qfs* se lisant certainement /Qefas/ dans le cas de Κηφας, mais /Qayafas/ dans le cas de Καϊάφας. C'est d'ailleurs ce qui se voit dans les autres occurrences transcrivant Καϊάφας par ܩܝܥܦܣ, *Qy'fs* [35] où la deuxième voyelle /a/ est rendue par ܥ, ', solution qui est à demi satisfaisante. Les lectionnaires montrent encore deux autres solutions, la transcription ܩܥܦܐܣ, *Qyf's* [36] où c'est la troisième voyelle /a/ qui est écrite, et la transcription ܩܦܐܥܣ, *Q'yps* [37] où c'est la première voyelle /a/ qui est écrite. Toutes ces solutions demeurent

[31] *Mc* 1, 21 dans le CCR (Lewis 1909, 70) et *Lc* 10, 15 dans le CSZR (Desreumaux 1997, 76).

[32] *Mt* 8, 5 (Lewis 1899, 72) ; *Mc* 2, 1 (*Ibid.*, 139) ; *Lc* 4, 23 (*Ibid.*, 283) ; *Jn* 2, 12 (*Ibid.*, 9) ; et *passim*.

[33] Lewis 1899, 263.

[34] *Ibid.*, 196.

[35] En *Mt* 26, 3 par le lectionnaire B (Lewis 1899, 175) ; *Mt* 26, 57 par A, B et C (*Ibid.*, 180) ; *Lc* 3, 2 par B (*Ibid.*, 180) ; *Jn* 11, 49 par A et C (*Ibid.*, 46) ; *Jn* 18, 28 par A et B (*Ibid.*, 196).

[36] Adoptée par A et C en *Mt* 26, 3 (Lewis 1899, 175).

[37] Adoptée par B en *Jn* 11, 49 (*Ibid.*, 46).

insatisfaisantes et sont significatives du problème de l'écriture de la vocalisation en christo-palestinien. Celle-ci qui fait très souvent usage des semi-consonnes ﻙ, ʾ et ﺍ, Y, reste facultative et donne l'impression d'une graphie hésitante alors que le système conserve toute sa cohérence.

La liste des anthroponymes et des toponymes qui attestent de la transcription de *kappa* par l'araméen ﻕ, *Q* est fournie :

Κιλικία, « Cilicie » > ﻙ[ﺍ]ﻗﺍﻟﻕ [38] et ﻙﺍﻗﺍﻟﺍﻕ [39]
Κλεόπας, « Cléopas » > ﻛﻟﻳﺍﻟﻕ [40]
Κλήμης, « Clément » > ﻛﻟﻼﻳﻁﻟﻕ [41]
Κολοσσαί, « Colossiens » > ﻛﻟﻛﻟﻭﻕ [42]
Κόρινθος, « Corinthe » > ﻛﻭﺭﻳﻧﺛﻭﻕ [43]
Κρήτη, « Crète » > ﺍﻼﻳﺗﻕ [44] et ﻙﺭﺍﻳﺗﻕ [45]
Κνίδος, « Cnide » > ﻛﻭﻧﺩﻕ [46]
Κρίσπος, « Crispus » > ﻛﻭﺭﻛﺍﻳﻕ [47]
Κύπρος, « Chypre » > ﻛﻭﻳﺑﺍﻕ [48]
Κυρήνη, « Cyrène » > ﻙﺍﺩﺍﻳﻕ [49]
Κυρηναῖος, « Cyrénien » > [53],ﻙﺍﺩﺍﻳﻗﺍﻕ [52],ﺍﺩﻙﺍﻳﻕ [51],ﺍﻙﺍﺩﺍﻳﻕ [50],ﺍﻙﺍﺩﺍﻳﻕ [55].ﻙﺍﺩﺍﻳﻕ [54],ﻙﺍﺩﺍﻳﻕ

[38] *Lc* 21, 39 dans Ms. Göttingen Syr. 20, f. 1 (Duensing 1906, 151).
[39] *Ga* 1, 21 dans CCR (Lewis 1899, 146).
[40] *Lc* 24, 18 dans A, B et C (*Ibid.*, 4).
[41] *Phl* 4, 3, fragment palimpseste XIV de Damas (Schulthess 1905, 71).
[42] *Col* 1, 2 (*Ibid.*, 74).
[43] *2 Co* 1, 1 (Lewis 1899, 134).
[44] *Ac* 27, 7 dans CCR (Lewis 1909, 98).
[45] *Ac* 27, 12.13.21 dans CCR (*Ibid.*, 100).
[46] *Ac* 27, 7 dans CCR (*Ibid.*, 98).
[47] *1 Co* 1, 14 dans CCR (*Ibid.*, 116).
[48] *Ac* 21, 3 dans CCR (*Ibid.*, 88).
[49] *Ac* 2, 10 dans le lectionnaire médiéval de Cambridge (Lewis 1907, 3).
[50] *Mt* 27, 32 dans CCR (Lewis 1909, 62).
[51] *Mt* 27, 32 dans lectionnaires A et B (Lewis 1899, 210).
[52] *Mt* 27, 32 dans lectionnaire C (*Ibid.*, 210).
[53] *Mc* 15, 21 dans lectionnaire A (*Ibid.*, 202).
[54] *Mc* 15, 21 dans lectionnaire B (*Ibid.*, 202).
[55] *Mc* 15, 21 dans lectionnaire C (*Ibid.*, 202).

Κυρήνιος, « Quirinius » > ܩܘܪܝܢܝܘܣ [56] et ܩܘܝܪܝܢܘܣ [57]
Κωσάμ, « Kosam » > ܩܘܣܐܡ [58] et ܩܘܣܡ [59]

2.2.2 En corollaire : le K *araméen transcrit le* Kh *grec*

La cohérence du système repose sur le fait corollaire de la transcription du *K* grec par le *Q* araméen : la transcription du *K* araméen par le *Khi* grec. On en a plusieurs exemples en christo-palestinien :

Χαναναία, « Cananéenne » > ܟܢܥܢܝܬ [60] et ܟܢܥܢܝܐ [61]
Χλόη, « Chloé » > ܫܠܟܠܘ [62]
Χουζᾶς , « Chouza » > ܟܘܙܐ [63]
Χοραζειν, « Chorazin » > ܟܘܪܙܝܢ [64]

Ainsi donc, quand le christo-palestinien doit transcrire du grec un nom propre, il respecte les transcriptions *kappa* > *quf* et *xi* > *kaf* que Krauss a mises en évidence.[65] Pour les substantifs communs plus ou moins courants que le christo-palestinien emprunte au grec qui ont été installés dans son lexique, cette règle ne s'applique pas toujours, ainsi que Krauss l'a explicité également. Par exemple, le mot κιβωτός, « arche » n'est pas traduit comme le fait le syriaque de la Pshitta en Mt 24, 38 (par le mot ܬܝܒܬܐ). Le christo-palestinien transcrit ici le grec, mais avec un *K* alors qu'on attendait un *Q*: ܩܒܘܛܘܣ et ce dans les trois lectionnaires médiévaux A, B et C. La chose est d'autant plus remarquable que le judéo-araméen transcrit bien κιβώτιον par קבוטין, *qbwtyn*.[66]

[56] *Lc* 2, 2 dans lectionnaires A et C (*Ibid.*, 254).
[57] *Lc* 2, 2 dans lectionnaire B (*Ibid.*, 254).
[58] *Lc* 3, 28 dans lectionnaire B (*Ibid.*, 262).
[59] *Lc* 3, 28 dans lectionnaire C (*Ibid.*, 262).
[60] *Mt* 15, 22 dans lectionnaire A (*Ibid.*, 262).
[61] *Mt* 15, 22 dans lectionnaire M42, f. 7rb, lecture 11 (inédit).
[62] *1 Co* 1, 11 dans CCR (Lewis 1909, 116).
[63] *Lc* 8, 3 dans lectionnaires A, B, C (Lewis 1899, 290).
[64] *Lc* 10, 13 dans CSZR (Desreumaux 1997, 76).
[65] Krauss II, 1899.
[66] *Ibid.*, 499.

3. Les variantes textuelles

Lorsqu'on compare les passages du Nouveau Testament en grec, en syriaque et en araméen christo-palestinien, on constate d'abord des différences de traduction, qui apparaissent de simples options du traducteur. Par exemple, en Mt 8, 14, « Jésus entrait dans la maison de Pierre ». Dans le grec, dont Nestle-Aland[67] à cet endroit ne signale pas de manuscrit variant sur le nom « Pierre », il s'agit de Πέτρος. La Vetus Syra[68] traduit ܫܡܥܘܢ ܟܐܦܐ *Šmʿwn Kʾfʾ*, « Simon Pierre » ; la Pshitta[69] traduit ܫܡܥܘܢ, *Šmʿwn*, « Simon » ; l'Harqléenne dans le manuscrit[70] du Vat. sir. 267, f. 11[ra], suit le grec et transcrit ܦܛܪܘܣ, *Pṭrws*. Le christo-palestinien aussi traduit exactement le grec qu'il transcrit ici ܒܛܪܘܣ, *Bṭrws*, « Betros », tant dans le folio médiéval de Göttingen[71] que dans les deux lectionnaires médiévaux B et C du Sinaï.[72]

Les appellations de l'apôtre – 80 occurrences dans l'ensemble des Évangiles – sont de trois façons : Simon Pierre, Pierre, Simon. Elles ne sont pas fidèlement suivies par la Vetus Syra ni la Pshitta.[73] En revanche, le christo-palestinien respecte le texte dans la plupart des cas ; on compte trois fois (en Mt 10, 2 ; Jn 20, 6 ; 21, 11) où Σίμων Πέτρος est appelée seulement *Pṭrws*, une seule fois (Lc 5, 8) où Σίμων Πέτρος est appelée seulement *Symwn* et une seule fois (Mt 17, 25) où Σίμων est traduit *Pṭrws*.

[67] Nous citons la « 28. revidierte Auflage » de 2012.

[68] Nous citons selon l'édition de Burkitt 1904 et Lewis 1909.

[69] Nous citons l'édition de Mar-Gabriel, établie sur le ms. de Mardin, Église des Quarante Martyrs 35/2 peut-être datable du XIII[e] siècle.

[70] Le ms. Vat. sir. 267 est peut-être datable du VIII[e] siècle (voir Taylor 2017, 306).

[71] Duensing 1955, 119.

[72] Lewis – Gibson 1899, 71; le verset manque dans le lectionnaire A.

[73] Σίμων Πέτρος est simplement nommé *Šmʿwn* 6 fois dans la Vetus Syra et 3 fois dans la Pshittta ; Πέτρος est nommé *Šmʿwn Pṭros* 12 fois dans la Vetus Syra et 3 fois dans la Pshittta ; Πέτρος est nommé *Šmʿwn* 18 fois dans la Vetus Syra et 20 fois dans la Pshittta ; Σίμων Πέτρος est nommé *Šmʿwn Pṭros* 17 fois dans la Vetus Syra et 21 fois dans la Pshittta.

4. Les variantes de graphie

Cette constance du christo-palestinien dans la traduction fidèle au texte grec[74] s'accompagne d'une constance remarquable dans la graphie, caractéristique du christo-palestinien. Dans toutes les occurrences, Πέτρος est transcrit ܦܛܪܘܣ, *Pṭrws* dans les manuscrits de la période ancienne (CSZR, M56, CCR) comme dans les lectionnaires médiévaux A, B et M42, avec l'initiale propre au christo-palestinien, ܛ, le « P inversum » qui transcrit toujours le Π grec ; dans la plupart des cas, il est muni des deux points suscrits ܛ̈ dont la signification n'est pas bien établie.[75]

Il est remarquable que, dans la plupart des cas, dans les lectionnaires C et M41, la graphie est ܒܛܪܘܣ, *Bṭros*, la réalisation du phonème initial /P/ en /B/ devant se comprendre en milieu désormais arabisé ; de fait les lectionnaires C et M41 sont certainement les plus récents manuscrits christo-palestiniens. On note seulement une variante graphique : en Mc 3, 16, M42 écrit ܦܛ̈ܪܘܣ, *Pṭros,* seul cas insérant la voyelle.

5. Les manuscrits christo-palestiniens du Nouveau Testament : une question de traduction et de retranscription

L'examen des quelques anthroponymes et toponymes du Nouveau Testament dans les manuscrits araméens christo-palestiniens les plus anciens comme ceux de la période médiévale, peut nous suggérer quelques pistes de réflexion sur cette littérature, sous réserve d'inventaire plus complet.

Le texte christo-palestinien suit fidèlement le texte grec ; les manuscrits médiévaux suivent la recension byzantine. Depuis la période des plus anciens manuscrits, les noms propres grecs sont

[74] Tandis que la Vetus Syra s'en écarte 38 fois et la Pshitta 27 fois ; en ce qui concerne les noms propres, cela contredit l'assertion d'A. S. Lewis, selon qui les manuscrits des lectionnaires A, B et C « sont pour l'essentiel en accord avec le Codex Sinaiticus et le Codex Vaticanus. » (Lewis 1894, xix).

[75] D'autant moins qu'on trouve dans les manuscrits médiévaux le ܪ̈, R dans des mots d'évidence au singulier : les deux points suscrits ont un sens qui nous échappe.

transcrits et même souvent translittérés en christo-palestinien plutôt que traduits ; leur graphie – *pace* Adler – est cohérente ; elle se maintient dans la transcription du *kappa* et du *khi* ainsi que du *pi* qui a fait l'objet de la création d'un caractère particulier le distinguant du *phi* ; les manuscrits les plus récents le réalisent en B. Les introductions ou les suppressions de voyelle dans les graphies sont en nombre restreint.

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Il brontologion *mandaico nel* ʔAsfar Malwašia *250:11-252:1, preliminari di una comparazione*[1]

ALFREDO CRISCUOLO

This contribution is the second in a series of preliminary studies on the Mandaean *omina* transmitted in the *ʔAsfar Malwašia*. The first work aimed to highlight the cultural adaptations that might emerge in the transitions from one tradition to another within the transmission chain. In this study, we will focus on the *brontologion* in AM I 250:11–252:1, with the aim of bringing to light thematic convergences through a systematic comparison with Mesopotamian *omina* published in the *Iqqur Ipuš* and those from the Byzantine period published in the *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum*. The results, still preliminary, will be presented in tabular form.

Keywords: Mandaean *Omina* – Mesopotamian *Omina* – Byzantine *Omina*

Questo contributo segue un primo lavoro di analisi [2] degli *omina* mandaici tràditi nel *ʔAsfar Malwašia* (AM).[3] Con l'intento di ricostruire, anche solo parzialmente, la catena di trasmissione di questi testi, si cercò di mettere in evidenza gli adattamenti

[1] Caro Riccardo, con tutto il mio affetto e la mia gratitudine, ti dedico queste poche pagine dove aggiungo un altro piccolo tassello di una lunga storia di relazioni intertestuali.

[2] Criscuolo 2022. Si rinvia a questo contributo sia come introduzione generale all'argomento trattato in questa sede, sia per i dettagli descrittivi dei corpora mandaici e accadici.

[3] AM I 241:19-245:5 e AM II 274: 2-46. Per il testo dell'AM si rinvia all'edizione Drower 1949.

culturali che potevano emergere nei passaggi da una tradizione all'altra. Sebbene l'analisi fosse solo un primo approccio condotto senza un vero criterio sistematico, un dato emerse sopra tutti gli altri: la stretta correlazione con gli *omina* mesopotamici da un lato e quelli di epoca bizantina, già copie della tradizione ellenistico-romana, dall'altro.[4] In questa sede ci soffermeremo sul *brontologion* tràdito in AM I 250:11-252:1 con l'intento di far emergere le convergenze tematiche attraverso un confronto sistematico con gli *omina* mesopotamici e quelli di epoca bizantina pubblicati nel *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum* (CCAG).[5]

Come è noto, il genere degli *omina* è diffuso in tutte le culture e le lingue dell'ecumene euro-afro-asiatico, dall'antichità fin quasi ad oggi con un'eco nei calendari agricoli dei nostri nonni. Non avendo lo spazio per riproporre i testi in lingua, ci sia consentita una loro breve descrizione per evidenziare le caratteristiche utili alla comparazione.

Nell'AM in merito ai tuoni, oltre la breve pericope che va da 250:11 a 252:1, la Drower[6] attribuisce alla medesima serie brontologica le pericopi in 252:2-253:5 e nella seconda parte dell'AM quelle in 264:42-266-40; 266:41-268:13 e 268:14-270:24. In questa sede l'analisi sarà condotta solo sul primo testo (250:11-252:1).

Tra i cinque testi solo il primo[7] individua il tuono con il lessema **rima** (*RAM*)[8] dalla radice comune RʕM (DJBA: 1090b; TS: 3941; CSD: 546; Jas.: 1457; DJPA: 528a; DCH7: 527-8; DUL2: 716;[9]

[4] È doveroso ricordare che tale associazione fu da subito intuita ma non indagata nelle recensioni all'edizione della Drower dell'AM da Neugebauer (1950) e Furlani (1950).

[5] Cumont – Boll 1898-1953.

[6] Drower 1949.

[7] Il titolo del testo è: **atuata ḏrima ḏraiim** "Segni (presagi, portenti) del tuono che tuona".

[8] V. **rima 1** in MD 433b.

[9] La forma ugaritica *rʕt* è in realtà da ricondurre all'alternanza radicalica RʕR-RʕT/D, per la quale cfr. DCH7: 513; DCPA: 405b; DJPA 527; Lane: 1105. Sarebbe interessante ricostruire la storia di questo campo lessicale, dalla "voce (tonante) delle divinità" al "rumore/tuono".

AHW2: 986). Le altre pericopi ricorrono ai lessemi **guha**[10] e **gargul**[11] che, come per **rima**, rientrano nell'ambito semantico del rumore/fracasso/frastuono ma che, da una ricerca a maglie larghe, non risulta siano attestati con il significato di tuono almeno nell'aramaico orientale (GWH'= DJBA: 266b; Jastrow1: 219;[12] GLGL= DJBA 285a; LS: 232; TS1: 712-3). Dal punto di vista linguistico solo gli ultimi tre testi sono ascrivibili a una fase più tarda (soprattutto per il lessico che comporta non poche difficoltà), mentre i primi due sembrano rientrare nella fase classica.[13]

Ai fini di una prima classificazione, utile al confronto con i testi in greco, possiamo descrivere gli *omina* in base al loro calendario: se sono cioè distribuiti in base ai giorni o ai mesi, se seguono calendari lunari o solari, oppure se i vari presagi vengono attribuiti ai segni zodiacali o a sistemi misti. La distribuzione calendariale è innanzitutto un indizio utile alla datazione. Infatti, è possibile stabilire una generica sequenza del tipo prima/dopo, o una maggiore o minore seriorità dei testi, sulla scorta di due elementi di riscontro: storicamente gli *omina* mensili precedono quelli zodiacali. Purtroppo, non è facile stabilire, tra questi due poli, la giusta posizione degli *omina* misti. Se nel caso degli *omina* mandaici il numero dei testi misti è relativamente basso, il dato si inverte con gli *omina* bizantini pubblicati nei volumi del CCAG, complicando le comparazioni.[14]

[10] V. **guha** in MD 82.

[11] V. **gargul** in MD 78, ovverosia la "ruota" (cfr. il più comune *galgal*), intendendo metaforicamente il tuono come rumore della ruota. Utilizzato anche con il senso di "circolo" e quindi "sfera celeste". In ogni caso non è attestato con il significato di tuono nei testi più antichi, solo nel Libro di Giovanni la cui seriorità non è applicabile a tutto il testo, cfr. Häberl – McGrath 2020, 64-65.

[12] È l'unico ad ipotizzare il significato di tuono proprio sulla scorta del mandaico. Più comunemente si riferisce ai rumori del sottosuolo come quelli provocati dai terremoti.

[13] Per una prima disamina linguistica dell'AM si rinvia a Müller-Kessler 1999.

[14] In maniera schematica ricordiamo la periodizzazione stilata da Pingree 1998: I per. *Omina* mesopotamici; II per. *Omina* achemenidi (non attestati); III per. *Omina* seleucidi/tolemaici; IV per. *Omina* ellenistico/romani. Gli ultimi due periodi ovviamente si sovrappongono parzialmente ma hanno ragione di esistere

Il primo testo (250:11-252:1) e il secondo (252:2-253:5) sono distribuiti su un calendario mensile a cominciare dal mese di Nisan.[15] Il terzo (264:42-266-40) è sempre mensile ma con lunazioni. Il quarto (266:41-268:13) segue la posizione della luna attraverso la fascia zodiacale iniziando da **ʕmbra**/Ariete. Il quinto (268:14-270:24) segue un calendario mensile (quello arabo) scandito settimana per settimana.

Il quadro che emerge dai testi della tradizione mesopotamica è incompleto. Se per i terremoti potevamo rivolgerci all'*Enuma Anu Enlil* (=EAE) con ricchezza di dati, come pure agli altri testi delle collezioni di *omina*, per i tuoni possiamo fare ricorso quasi solo esclusivamente all'*Iqqur Ipuš* (=II).[16] È infatti solo in questa serie, dal § 88 al § 94,[17] che abbiamo testimonianza di *omina* brontologici.[18]

Per quanto riguarda i testi raccolti in CCAG, abbiamo una ventina di *omina* dedicati esclusivamente ai tuoni.[19] È utile

soprattutto per la diffusione territoriale delle diverse tradizioni. Per chiarezza, è noto che la tradizione degli *omina* mesopotamici si diffuse in Egitto e in Palestina già in epoca Achemenide (Pingree 1997; Quack 2018), ciononostante il *brontologion* aramaico più antico che ci è pervenuto, cioè quello di Qumran (cfr. Greenfield – Sokoloff 1994; Wise 1994), viene datato al I s. d.C. proprio sulla scorta dell'evidente identità formale con gli *omina* ellenistici. Sebbene lontano dagli *omina* mandaici, consigliamo caldamente la lettura di Turfa 2012, poichè la studiosa rintraccia attraverso i testi ellenistici l'origine mesopotamica del *brontologion* etrusco. Si spera che alla fine di questi studi preliminari, si possa arrivare a risultati simili o anche solo vicini a quelli dell'insigne etruscologa.

[15] Sul calendario mandaico si rinvia a Drower 1937 (ed. 1962), 83-84; e Häberl 2021 per uno studio maggiormente dettagliato.

[16] Anche per la tradizione mesopotamica (testi e bibliografia) si rinvia a Criscuolo 2022.

[17] Per semplificare le citazioni si sono rinumerati i testi da 1 a 7 seguendo l'ordine di Labat 1965 dal §88 al §94.

[18] I frammenti pubblicati dalla Gehlken 2012, testimoniano solo l'esistenza di *omina* dei tuoni nell'EAE, purtroppo inservibili per un confronto. Per l'II v. Labat 1965.

[19] Le copie e le raccolte con più categorie di presagi non sono state prese in considerazione. Anche in questo caso si sono numerati i testi da 1 a 20 per semplificare.

proporre una breve descrizione ai fini di una prima cernita, il meno arbitraria possibile:[20]

1) CCAG III, 50-52. Cod. Mediolanensis 19, f. 315. *Περὶ βροντῶν* "Sui tuoni". Il calendario è mensile con inizio nel mese di ottobre e fine in settembre ma senza seguire una scansione omogenea: ad ottobre la scansione è di tipo giornaliero ma concentrata saltuariamente solo nelle prime due settimane: dopo il primo giorno (εαν φωνη βροντης ἀκουσθη <εν> α' του μηνός, ἀνθρωπος μέγας ἀποθνήσκει) si salta al quarto, al sesto, ottavo, nono, undicesimo, dodicesimo, tredicesimo, quattordicesimo e quindicesimo, concludendo con un presagio unico per gli ultimi quindici giorni (και εάν μετα ιε' εως λ' ἀκουσθη παν καλόν και ἀγαθόν εσται). Negli altri mesi il ricorso ai giorni è rarissimo, mentre i presagi vengono indicati in base a diverse condizioni metereologiche e astronomiche senza un apparente criterio omogeneo, lasciando intendere che probabilmente siamo di fronte a una versione abbreviata di un testo più lungo. Secondo Turfa, ciò sarebbe da attribuire al primo Impero Romano per le allusioni a Giulio Cesare nel mese di luglio.[21] Non adatto ai fini della nostra comparazione.

2) CCAG IV, 128-131. Cod. Bononiensis 18, ff. 327v-329. Anepigrafo. I curatori così descrivono la forma: «In priore praesagia secundum signorum zodiaci, in altero secundum mensium anni ordinem disponebantur», iniziando con Ariete/Marzo per finire con Pesci/Febbraio. Pur essendoci delle somiglianze formali con il nostro testo, non risponde ai criteri per la comparazione.

3) CCAG IV, 170-172. Cod. Neapolitani 20, f. 123v-125v. Nonostante il titolo *Ἡ ἑρμηνεία του σεισμολογίου δια των δώδεκα Ζωδίων*, il testo è prevalentemente un *brontologion* e solo alla fine del presagio aggiunge un'apodosi seismologica come in molti altri

[20] La mancanza di studi specifici ci obbliga a maneggiare testi di un ambito linguistico che non è di nostra competenza, rallentando di molto questi studi preliminari.

[21] Turfa 2012, 294. In realtà non c'è nessun riferimento storico a Giulio Cesare e l'interpretazione della Turfa non è convincente ma non è questa la sede per discuterne.

testi di questa tipologia. La scansione è sia mensile che zodiacale, inizia ad aprile/Toro e si interrompe a gennaio/Pesci. Le molte caratteristiche tipiche dei testi ellenistici, non lo rendono utile alla comparazione.

4) CCAG IV, 172-173. Cod. Neapolitani 20, f. 125v-127. Simile al precedente, la scansione è solo mensile e segue l'ordine giuliano, iniziando a gennaio ma interrompendosi ad agosto. Nonostante l'ordine dei mesi non sia quello semitico, il testo è interessante perché la caratteristica di indicare i giorni e le ore di giorno e di notte per ogni mese, come nei testi accadici dell'EAE, è indizio di seriorità. Adatto alla comparazione.

5) CCAG VII, 163-167. Cod. Berolinenses 25, f. 12. Tonitruale ignoti auctoris. L'editore, F. Boll, lo descrive come un calendario luni-solare.[22] Interessanti gli accostamenti fatti con i codici napoletani e soprattutto con la pericope tradita nei Geoponica (I 10) di Basso e attribuita a Zoroastro.[23] Non adatto.

6) CCAG VII, 226-230. Cod. Berolinenses 26, f. 152v. *Βροντολόγιον Ἑρμου του Τρισμεγίστου*. Nonostante il titolo rientri perfettamente nella categoria delle attribuzioni pseudoepigrafe, alcuni contenuti, soprattutto geografici, sembrano collocare questo testo nell'ambiente dell'Egitto tolemaico/romano. Ciononostante, esso si presenta come un rifacimento tardo e, sebbene presenti una scansione mensile, è difficilmente utilizzabile per la comparazione.

7) CCAG VIII/3, 123-125. Cod. Parisini 35 (Paris. Gr. 2118, p. 77). *Ἑρμηνεια τον βροντολογίου τών δώδεκα μηνών*. Come indica il titolo la scansione è mensile e come avvisa l'editore è per buona parte quasi sovrapponibile al primo codice napoletano (CCAG IV 170-172). La presenza di elementi tardi e adattamenti ad aree culturali troppo lontane dal nostro testo mandaico (ad es.: la coltivazione del vino), non lo rendono adatto alla comparazione.

8) CCAG VIII/3, 166-167. Cod. Parisini 43 (Paris. Gr. 2215, ff. 277-278). *Περὶ βροντολόγιον τῶν ιβ' ζῳδίων*. Come dichiarato dal

[22] Si considera lunare quando si indica la posizione della luna nei diversi segni zodiacali.

[23] Lo si può apprezzare nell'edizione a c. di Lelli 2010, 30-33.

titolo, il testo presenta una scansione lunare/zodiacale. L'editore specifica: «Recentioris aetatis [IX saec.? F.C:] hoc tonitruale esse regionibus, de quibus fit mentio, docemur».[24] Presumo che l'ipotesi si basi su apodosi tipo: «Κριός. Ἐάν βροντήσῃ ἢ ἀστραπή γένηται καί τύχῃ ἡ Σελήνη είς τόν Κριόν, είς τήν Ἰνδίαν αἷμαν χυθήσεται». L'India non è citata nel nostro testo, ma è presente in altri dell'AM (e non solo). Non sempre i nomi di luogo aiutano nella comparazione tra testi che venivano copiati e ricopiati, spesso senza un vero criterio. Non adatto.

9) CCAG VIII/3, 168-169. Cod. Parisini 44 (Paris. Gr. 2316, f. 325v). *Βροντολόγιον Δαβὶδ τοῦ προφήτου.* La scansione è mensile da gennaio a dicembre e unisce tuoni e terremoti (formula molto comune), riporta numeri dei giorni e ore. Essendo assenti gli elementi tipici del milieu ellenistico/romano, è adatto alla comparazione.

10) CCAG VIII/3, 169-171. Cod. Parisini 44 (Paris. Gr. 2316, ff. 326v-327v). *Ἕτερον βροντολόγιον τοῦ σεληνιακοῦ.* La scansione è mista, inizia con un calendario zodiacale ma dai gemelli diventa lunare. Non adatto.

11) CCAG VIII/3, 181-187. Cod. Parisini 44, ff. 441-447. *Σεληνοδρόμιον, σεισμολόγιον, βροντολόγιον.* Il solo titolo di questo testo ci pone di fronte alla sua complessità. Tra i più lunghi della serie combina in scansione mensili presagi di terremoti, tuoni e presagi astronomici (lunari). Nonostante questa complessità, non presenta quegli elementi della tradizione ellenistico romana, assenti anche nel testo mandaico, e come sottolinea il suo editore,[25] è molto vicino al famoso brontologion tràdito da Giovanni Lido nel suo *De*

[24] CCAG VIII/3, 166.

[25] «[…] Noli tamen existimare, quamvis multa consentiant, utroque codice unum et eundem textum praeberi. Etenim, ut de plurimis praesagiis hic praetermissis nihil dicam, plenior nonnunquam Lydi lunario hic textus est, ita ut utrumque lunarium ex ampliore opusculo contractum esse appareat. Praesagiorum enim, quae Lydus consulto praetermisisse videtur (v. ed. Wachsmuth, xxxiv sqq.; ed. Hase, xviii) quaedam, quae praesertim ad sacra attinebant (v. ivi, 185, 18; 183, 9; 185, 27; 187,8), hic servantur. Itaque ad fontem Lydi cognoscendum, ceteris opusculis quae magna vel aliqua ex parte ex eodem auctore emanant adiunctis, hoc excerptum operam dabit egregiam». CCAG VIII/3, 180-181.

Ostentis. Ciononostante, la sua caratteristica di documento composito lo esclude da questa prima fase comparativa.

12) CCAG VIII/3, 193-197. Cod. Parisini 61 (Paris. Gr. 1191, ff. 42v-47): *Βροντοσκόπιον τῶν δώδεκα ζῳδίων καθ' ἑκάστην νύκτα <κατὰ> τὸν τῆς Σελήνης δρόμον*. Anche in questo caso il titolo descrive bene il contenuto e la scansione, che è zodiacale secondo il corso notturno della luna. Molto evidenti sono gli elementi della tradizione ellenistico/romana.[26] Non adatto.

13) CCAG IX/2, 120-3. Cod. Londinese, Harleiano 47 (Harl. 6295, f. 148). *Βροντολόγιον*. Secondo il suo editore, il testo è stato pesantemente rimaneggiato, anche nella scansione temporale, con la sostituzione dei nomi dei mesi ellenistici o tolemaici con quelli romani. Gli elementi tardi e la riformulazione associata allo zodiaco lo rendono inutilizzabile ai fini della comparazione.

14) CCAG IX/2, 124-126. Cod. Regius 48 di Londra (Reg. 16 C. II, f. 46). *Ἀρχὴ σὺν Θεῷ βροντολογίου καὶ Σεισμολογίου τῶν ιβ' μηνῶν*. Secondo l'editore è il testo che meglio ha conservato gli elementi della tradizione mesopotamica. La scansione è mensile, riunendo presagi di tuoni e di terremoti in riferimento ai fenomeni astronomici della luna, con scansioni diurne e notturne. Adatto alla comparazione.

15) CCAG X, 58-59. Cod. Athenienses 2 (Bibl. Pub. 462, f. 185). *Ἀρχὴ τοῦ βροντολογίου τῶν ιβ' μηνῶν*. Attribuito al profeta Esdra, ha una scansione mensile da settembre ad agosto.[27] Adatto alla comparazione.

[26] Oltre a citare i "popoli barbari", l'Egitto, Babilonia e gli arabi, si cita spesso Eudosso. Per una migliore comprensione mi limito a citare il presagio in Ariete: «Περί της έν τω Κριω νυκτερινης βροντοσκοπίας. εί έν τω Κριω βροντήση, μεγάλα έπικαινίσματα εσονται [κενά]. εκαστον εις τα ιδια δηλοί άπελθείν και έν ταίς ίδίαις χώραις, καρπών δέ έπίδειξιν τών μελλόντων κρείττονα. οι δέ Βαβυλώνιοι γράφουσι βαρβάρους έπελθειν ταις πόλεσι και πάντας φυγη χρήσασθαι τους ένοικουντας καί μετά ταύτα εις τά ίδια έπιστρέψουσιν. Ευδοξος δέ γράφει έν τη άνατολη πειναν εσεσθαι και είς τά θρέμματα θάνατον, κριθης δέ καί όσπρίων έπίδειξιν. εί δέ σεισμός γένηται, κάτά τοπον φθοράν σημαίνει». Da notare quel «οι δέ Βαβυλώνιοι γράφουσι …», «I Babilonesi scrivono che dei Barbari invaderanno le città e che tutti gli abitanti dovranno fuggire etc», questo è un tipico esempio di carattere ellenistico.

[27] Così presentato dal suo editore (Delatte): «Huius opusculi argumento nefastorum dierum descriptio, ex libello Esdrae prophetae tributo deprompta,

16) CCAG X, 60-62. Cod. Athenienses 5 (Bibl. Pub. 778, ff. 161v-164v). *Ἀρχὴ σὺν Θεῷ βροντολογίου καὶ σεισμολογίου κατὰ τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ μηνός*. Anche questo testo unisce presagi di tuoni e terremoti con una scansione lunare secondo la sua posizione nella fascia zodiacale. Pur avendo molti elementi della tradizione mesopotamica, la sua composizione è tarda e quindi il testo non è adatto alla nostra comparazione.

17) CCAG X, 129-132. Cod. Athenienses 10 (Bibl. Pub. 1275, ff. 34v-37). *Βροντολόγιον τῶν δώδεκα μηνῶν*. Viene attribuito ad Eraclio il sapiente; la scansione è mensile, ma collegata ai segni zodiacali. Anche in questo caso gli elementi della tradizione più antica sono evidenti quanto quelli della sua composizione tarda. Non adatto.

18) CCAG X, 140-142. Cod. Athenienses 11 (Bibl. Pub. 1350, f. 15v). *Βροντολόγιον καὶ σεισμολόγιον*. La scansione è mensile/zodiacale ma i mesi vengono notati con i grafemi dell'alfabeto secondo il loro valore numerico, iniziando dalla vergine. I riferimenti all'Egitto hanno fatto pensare a una sua originaria datazione tolemaica.[28] Non adatto.

19) CCAG XI/1, 145-146. Cod. Scorialenses 1, f. 161. *Βροντολόγιον ἕτερον*. Non sono in grado di spiegare il titolo,[29] probabilmente perché molto breve rispetto alla norma (forse una versione condensata di altri). Certamente questo presagio ha molto in comune con la tradizione mesopotamica. La scansione è mensile con inizio a settembre, ma manca del mese di aprile. Adatto alla comparazione.

20) CCAG XI/1, 155-157. Cod. Scorialenses 1, f. 165. *Βροντολόγιον*. La scansione è zodiacale quindi è certamente tardo,

adiuncta est. Praesagia secundum mensium ordinem disposita multis in locis prope ad opusculum accedunt quod edidit Boudreaux in Catal., VIII, 3, p. 168 (ex cod. Paris. 44, f. 325').» Questo testo, come già notato dalla Turfa, ci fornisce un'indicazione molto interessante nel mese di agosto: «Αυγουστος. Έάν βροντήση, σωτηρια του κοσμου» che, insieme alle indicazioni moraleggianti aggiunte in calce al presagio, echeggiano un ambiente cristiano o gnostico. Se fosse vero sarebbe, a mia conoscenza, la prima attestazione di un carattere comunitario in questa tipologia di testi.

[28] Cfr. Turfa 2012, 300.

[29] Anche il codice parigino 44 in CCAG VIII/3, 169-171 viene definito "diverso".

pur conservando non pochi elementi utili alla comparazione. Non adatto.

In sintesi, risultano adatti ad una prima comparazione tematica i testi 4, 9, 14, 15, 19.

1. Tematiche di confronto

Le tematiche che ho scelto per il confronto, sono simili a quelle già utilizzate da Bezold-Boll (1911) e da Turfa (2012), sia per rispettare una certa continuità sia nella speranza che, un domani, i dati di queste e altre tabelle si possano integrare tra loro, ed essere paragonati con altre tradizioni ancora tutte da investigare (per esempio arabe e siriache). Le chiavi tematiche sono dodici: 1) Eventi meteorologici; 2) malattie e pestilenze degli esseri umani; 3) malattie e pestilenze degli animali; 4) parti di donne e/o degli animali (riproduzione in generale); 5) guerre, rivolte, tumulti; 6) morte o caduta di uomini illustri (sovrani, re, notabili); 7) eventi legati alle produzioni agricole; 8) eventi legati alle divinità; 9) luoghi citati; 10) acque (fiumi e mari); 11) zoologia; 12) botanica.

Il confronto è stato ridotto in forma tabellare, prima comparando il testo mandaico con i sette *omina* mesopotamici, poi in una seconda tabella con quelli bizantini.[30] Alla fine, si tireranno delle conclusioni parziali.

[30] La scelta è dettata da esigenze di spazio ma soprattutto per la non corrispondenza dei mesi semitici con quelli greci. Poiché questi testi sono tra loro lontani nel tempo ed esito di diversi adattamenti, non ha senso cercare la corrispondenza esatta dei mesi. Ciò che si spera di far emergere nelle future analisi è la diversa percezione dei medesimi contenuti che stiamo raccogliendo.

1.1 Eventi meteorologici[31]

Mese	Testo Mandaico	Testo Akk n° 1	Testo Akk n° 2	Testo Akk n° 3	Testo Akk n° 4	Testo Akk n° 5	Testo Akk n° 6	Testo Akk n° 7
Nisan	0	Rovesci di Adad → devastazi-one del grano	0	nuvoloso, pioggia, arcobale-no, fulmine	nuvoloso, arcobaleno, vento d'Oriente	0	0	0
Ayar	pioggia a Dilum[32]	0	0	0	Idem, vento del nord	0	0	0
Š/Siwan	0	0	0	0	Idem	0	diluvio	Piena
Tammuz Du'uzu	pioggia violenta	0	0	Fine delle piogge	Idem, vento d'Oriente	0	Fine di piogge e tempeste	0
Ab	0	0	fine di piogge e piene	Idem	Idem, vento d'Occidente	0	0	0
Elul	0	0	Piogge e piene precoci	0	Idem 4 venti, fulmine, piogge e piene	0	0	diluvio devastant e
Tišrin Tešrît	0	0	piogge e piene	0	Idem	0	0	Idem
Mašrawan Araḫsam na	0	0	piogge tardive	0	Idem	0	0	0
Kanun Kislev	grandine → raccolti dispersi	0	piogge	Fine delle piogge	Idem ma senza vento grande piena	piene	Rovesci di Adad (pioggia?)	0

[31] Naturalmente nei nostri testi il tuono è l'evento principale dell'apodosi, il segno "divino" che avrà una serie di conseguenze nelle protasi. Anche se da un punto di vista statistico potrebbe non avere un reale valore, si è scelto di inserirlo in previsione di future comparazioni, perché nei testi accadici sembrano coinvolti altri eventi metereologici oltre i tuoni in alcune protasi.

[32] Non toccando, in questa sede, la lingua dei testi, sono stati lasciati così come sono stati tramandati senza correzioni. In questo caso, ad esempio, è chiaro che si tratta di *Dilmun*.

Ṭebet	grandine → raccolti perduti	piogge e piene dei fiumi	tempo nuvoloso; piove/non piove	0	Idem vento d'Oriente, piene	piogge	Tempest	0
Śebaṭ	molta acqua (pioggia)	0	vento del sud	acqua nelle nuvole, niente pioggia	Idem vento del sud	0	0	0
Addar	0	piogge torrenziali	piogge/ schiarite	piena	Idem	0	0	0

Testi bizantini [33]

Testo	Evento metereologico
Bz n° 4	Tuoni (non tutti i mesi); piogge rare (maggio); grandine (luglio); nebbia (febbraio, luglio); fulmini (febbraio)
Bz n° 9	0
Bz n° 14	Abbondanza di acque [Piogge?] (gennaio); grandine (dicembre); nebbia (maggio, agosto, dicembre); fulmine (giugno); venti (agosto, novembre, febbraio)
Bz n° 15	0
Bz n° 19	Piogge (dicembre)

Nella letteratura mandaica, i fenomeni meteorologici sono centrali e ricorrenti: il tuono è il segno apodittico, seguito da pioggia, grandine e "molta" acqua. Gli effetti spaziano da abbondanza (Nisan) a disastri agricoli (Ṭebet, Kislev), includendo anche riferimenti a luoghi specifici in cui avvengono gli eventi (Dilum, Kadan).

In molti testi accadici il tuono si accompagna a piogge torrenziali, tempeste, piene e vento con forti effetti sulle colture. I diluvi devastatori in (6) e (7) trovano eco nel mandaico. Piogge e piene sono comunissime nei testi accadici nei mesi di Elul, Tešrît, Kislev e Ṭebet, con forti corrispondenze nei mesi in cui il testo mandaico riporta danni ai raccolti e pestilenza. Nei testi

[33] Nei testi bizantini la scansione del calendario non sempre corrisponde, dal momento che alcuni testi iniziano a gennaio, altri a marzo, altri a settembre. Per questo motivo si è optato per una tabella diversa, divisa testo per testo e non basata sui mesi, così pure si è aggiunta una colonna con alcune note esplicative, ove necessario.

bizantini, che pur presentano una discreta varietà di eventi atmosferici, il tema è trattato con minore ampiezza e in forma più generica ma soprattutto senza la drammaticità di "tempeste" e "diluvi devastanti".

1.2 Malattie e pestilenze umane

Mese	Testo Mandaico	Testo Akk n° 1	Testo Akk n° 2	Testo Akk n° 3	Testo Akk n° 4	Testo Akk n° 5	Testo Akk n° 6	Testo Akk n° 7
Nisan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ayar	0	Morti (generico)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Š/Siwan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tammuz Duʾuzu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ab	Malattia, epidemie mortali	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Elul	idem	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tišrin Tešrît	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mašrawan Araḫsamna	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kanun Kislev	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ṭebet	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Šebaṭ	Malattia generica	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Addar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Testi bizantini

Testo	Malattie umane	note
Bz n° 4	Morte generica (marzo); disgrazia generica (gennaio, aprile)	La disgrazia riguarda coloro che raccolgono il grano
Bz n° 9	Rovina non specificata per gli uomini (giugno); malattie non specificate (novembre)	
Bz n° 14	Pestilenza (marzo, dicembre); malattie (maggio, giugno)	

Bz n° 15	Malattie (ottobre, marzo); infermità (novembre)	
Bz n° 19	Peste (ottobre); malattie (maggio)	

Il tema è scarsamente presente nei corpora più antichi. Nei testi mesopotamici il tema è praticamente assente con una sola eccezione non del tutto chiara. Nel testo mandaico il tema è citato tre volte, due di esse in relazione alle città di Babilonia e Kadan. Nei testi bizantini il tema è più diffuso e si verifica più frequentemente in alcuni mesi più di altri, ad esempio marzo e maggio/giugno.

1.3 malattie e pestilenze animali

Mese	Testo Mandaico	Testo Akk n° 1	Testo Akk n° 2	Testo Akk n° 3	Testo Akk n° 4	Testo Akk n° 5	Testo Akk n° 6	Testo Akk n° 7
Nisan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ayar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ś/Siwan	Perdite tra gli animali	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tammuz Duʾuzu	Mortalità greggi del deserto	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ab	0	0	0		0	0	0	0
Elul	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tišrin Tešrît	Pestilenza tra le greggi al pascolo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mašrawan Araḫsamna	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kanun Kislev	0	0	0	0	0	0	Devastazione del bestiame causato dalle pioggie di Adad	0
Ṭebet	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Šebaṭ	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Addar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Testi bizantini

Testo	Malattie animali	note
Bz n° 4	Rovina dei quadrupedi (febbraio, maggio)	Generico non specificato
Bz n° 9	0	
Bz n° 14	0	A maggio ci si riferisce alla nebbia e non al tuono
Bz n° 15	0	A gennaio accade in concomitanza con un terremoto
Bz n° 19	0	A novembre accadde in concomitanza con un terremoto

Il testo mandaico è quello che presenta la maggiore copertura del tema, sia per la sua occorrenza in vari momenti dell'anno che per combinazione con altri eventi negativi. Forse il testo che più gli si avvicina è il Bizantino n°4 che spicca nel quasi totale silenzio dei corpora mesopotamici e bizantini.

1.4 Parti di donne e/o degli animali (riproduzione in generale)

Mese	Testo Mandaico	Testo Akk n° 1	Testo Akk n° 2	Testo Akk n° 3	Testo Akk n° 4	Testo Akk n° 5	Testo Akk n° 6	Testo Akk n° 7
Nisan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ayar	0	0	0	0	0	La riproduzione del bestiame prospererà	0	0
Ś/Siwan	0	0	0	0	0	La riproduzione delle bestie selvatiche e delle gazzelle prospererà	0	0
Tammuz Duʾuzu	0	0	0	0	0	La riproduzione degli esseri umani prospererà	0	0

Ab	0	0	0	0	0	La riproduzione degli uccelli prospererà	0	0
Elul	0	0	0	0	0	La riproduzione dei cani prospererà	0	0
Tišrin Tešrît	0	0	0	0	0	La riproduzione [...] si moltiplicherà	0	0
Mašrawan Araḫsamna	0	0	0	0	0	[...] prospererà	0	0
Kanun Kislev	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ṭebet	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Šebaṭ	Le donne incinte avranno parti difficili	0	0		0	0	0	0
Addar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Testi bizantini

Testo	Riproduzione umana/animale	
Bz n° 4	0	
Bz n° 9	0	
Bz n° 14	Aumento del bestiame (novembre)	Generico e non esplicito e con luna calante
Bz n° 15	Idem	Idem
Bz n° 19	0	

Il testo mandaico menziona solo una volta una difficoltà legata al parto umano. Tra i testi accadici, solo il n°5 tratta sistematicamente la prosperità riproduttiva di animali (domestici e selvatici) e donne, senza complicazioni come nel testo mandaico. I testi bizantini ignorano quasi del tutto il tema, salvo vaghi riferimenti ad un aumento del bestiame, che rendono debole il parallelo tematico.

1.5 Guerre, rivolte, tumulti

Mese	Testo Mandaico	Testo Akk n° 1	Testo Akk n° 2	Testo Akk n° 3	Testo Akk n° 4	Testo Akk n° 5	Testo Akk n° 6	Testo Akk n° 7
Nisan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ayar	Il re marcerà contro i suoi nemici	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ś/Siwan	L'uomo cadrà in battaglia	Rivolta nel paese	0	Ostilità tra re	0	0	0	0
Tammuz Du'uzu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ab	0	0	0	0	0	0	Re amici si faranno guerra	0
Elul	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tišrin Tešrît	0	0	0	0	0	0	Ci si sgozzerà a vicenda (tx. frammentario)	0
Mašrawan Araḫsamna	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kanun Kislev	Ribelli in molte città	Delle città saranno distrutte	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ṭebet	0	0	0	Attacco del nemico	0	0	0	0
Ṡebaṭ	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Addar	0	Il paese rovescerà il suo re	0	0	0	0	0	Ci sarà guerra

Testi bizantini

Testo	Guerre, rivolte, tumulti	note
Bz n° 4	Gennaio: Guerra Marzo: tumulti di Guerra e sollevazione dei nemici Maggio: disordine nel mondo	

	Luglio: tumulti tra gli uomini Agosto: grandi tumulti	
Bz n° 9	Febbraio, marzo, aprile: movimenti di guerra. Agosto: molte battaglie. Dicembre: rivolta di un grande personaggio contro un altro.	
Bz n° 14	Marzo: agitazione e sollevazione di popoli. Aprile (notte): guerra, prigionia. Maggio: movimento del re contro i nemici. Agosto: tumulto. Settembre (notte): spostamento dell'esercito, stragi. Novembre: movimento del re contro i nemici. Febbraio: rivolte e agitazioni dei popoli.	
Bz n° 15	Gennaio, febbraio, marzo: sollevazione dei nemici. Maggio: agitazione nel mondo. Luglio: agitazione e deportazione. Agosto: resa dei conti tra governanti.	
Bz n° 19	Settembre, ottobre: guerre e massacri reciproci. Gennaio: guerra. Febbraio: rovina Maggio: qualunque paese sarà sconvolto.	Febbraio: poco chiaro, da contestualizzare come effetto bellico.

Alcuni testi mesopotamici non sono espliciti e le formule potrebbero riferirsi a diverse tematiche. Ciononostante, la tematica appare diffusa, come pure in molti testi della tradizione mesopotamica. È però il corpus dei testi bizantini a presentare il maggior numero di occorrenze con una distribuzione quasi capillare.

1.6 Morte o caduta di uomini illustri (sovrani, re, notabili)

Mese	Testo Mandaico	Testo Akk n° 1	Testo Akk n° 2	Testo Akk n° 3	Testo Akk n° 4	Testo Akk n° 5	Testo Akk n° 6	Testo Akk n° 7
Nisan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ayar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ś/Siwan	L'uomo cadrà in battaglia e il rumore (di ciò) si diffonderà in tutte le città.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Tammuz Duʾuzu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ab	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Elul	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tišrin Tešrît	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mašrawan Araḫsamna	0	0	0	Un uomo conosciuto cadrà in guerra	0	0	(frammentario) I capi […] Il principe resterà (?)	0
Kanun Kislev	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ṭebet	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Šebaṭ	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Addar	0	Il paese rovescerà il suo re	0	0	0	0	0	0

Testi bizantini

Testo	Morte o caduta di uomini illustri	
Bz n° 4	Maggio: morte di uomini potenti Giugno: rovina di uomini potenti Luglio: morte di un uomo molto importante	
Bz n° 9	Febbraio: sarà ucciso un grande sovrano Marzo: perdita di uomini illustri Ottobre: moriranno uomini saggi Dicembre: morte improvvisa di grandi uomini	
Bz n° 14	Marzo: il re rovinerà quelli attorno a sé (?) Giugno: morte di uomini importantissimi Luglio: un grande dignitario morirà Settembre: rovina di un grande uomo	Marzo: coinvolgimento del re in azioni distruttive?
Bz n° 15	Settembre: moriranno uomini sapienti Dicembre: rovina su uomini importantissimi Febbraio: morte dei potenti Giugno: rovina di uomini importantissimi Luglio: muore un grande magistrato o governatore	
Bz n° 19	Agosto: perdita di amici, nemici e persone oneste Dicembre: morte improvvisa di grandi uomini Luglio: i sapienti periranno	

Nel testo mandaico si potrebbe dire che il tema è trattato in maniera implicita, sebbene con incisività. Anche in accadico i

riferimenti sono scarsi. I testi bizantini, invece, presentano una ricca rete di riferimenti alle figure illustri.

1.7 Eventi legati alle produzioni agricole

Mese	Testo Mandaico	Testo Akk n° 1	Testo Akk n° 2	Testo Akk n° 3	Testo Akk n° 4	Testo Akk n° 5	Testo Akk n° 6	Testo Akk n° 7
Nisan	0	I rovesci devasterann o il grano	Scarsità di grano (var. orzo nero)	Scarsa mietitura	Scarsità di sesamo e datteri	Scarsa mietitura	Abbondan-za nella mietitura	0
Ayar	0	0	Abbondan-za di grano e ceci	0	Scarsità di grano e ceci	Abbondanz a nella mietitura	0	0
Ś/Siwan	Il raccolto di grano sarà maledetto	0	Scarsità di grano	0	Scarsità di orzo nero	Idem	0	0
Tammuz Du'uzu	Le locuste divorerann o il grano	Il raccolto sarà fruttuoso	Scarsità di sesamo e datteri	0	Scarsità di sesamo e datteri	Idem	0	0
Ab	Perdita dei raccolti di grano e datteri	0	Difficoltà nelle coltivazioni per siccità	0	Scarsa mietitura	Idem	0	0
Elul	Idem	0	Buona irrigazione dei campi con buona mietitura	0	0	Idem	0	0
Tišrin Tešrît	Raccolti precoci e tardivi periranno	0	0	Abbondanz a nella mietitura	0	Idem	0	0
Mašrawan Araḫsamna	Cereali scarsi e perdita di *marganiata* [34]	0	Scarsità di sesamo e datteri	0	Scarsità di sesamo e datteri	Abbondanz a di datteri	0	0

[34] Forse germogli teneri.

Kanun Kislev	Scarsità di raccolti	0	Le locuste divorerann o il raccolto	0	0	0	Devastazion e di alberi da frutto, canneti, boschi	0
Ṭebet	Perdita dei raccolti per le alluvioni	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Šebaṭ	Perdita dei raccolti causata da terremoto	0	0	0	0	Scarsa mietitura	Vi sarà cumino e cumino di montagna	0
Addar	0	0	Le locuste divorerann o il raccolto	Abbondanz a nella mietitura	0	Idem	0	0

Testi bizantini

Testo	Eventi legati alle produzioni agricole
Bz n° 4	Gennaio, aprile, giugno: molto grano Marzo: molti semi nasceranno Giugno: distruzione del grano Settembre, ottobre, dicembre: abbondanza di grano, vino, olio
Bz n° 9	Marzo: abbondanza di vino e grano Aprile: molti frutti della terra Settembre, ottobre, dicembre: abbondanza di grano, vino, olio
Bz n° 14	Aprile: frutti legnosi senza olive Giugno: rovina del grano Ottobre, dicembre, novembre: abbondanza di vino, olio, grano
Bz n° 15	Aprile: molti frutti
Bz n° 19	Febbraio, marzo, luglio: rovina del grano e dei raccolti Aprile: molta frutta

La tematica è di primario interesse e non stupisce che sia ampiamente diffusa in tutti e tre i corpora.

1.8 Eventi legati alle divinità

Mese	Testo Mandaico	Testo Akk n° 1	Testo Akk n° 2	Testo Akk n° 3	Testo Akk n° 4	Testo Akk n° 5	Testo Akk n° 6	Testo Akk n° 7
Nisan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ayar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Š/Siwan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Tammuz Duʾuzu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ab	Gli dèi saliranno nei cieli (cioè abbandoneranno la terra)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Elul	Idem	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tišrin Tešrît	0	0	0	Gli dèi avranno misericordia del paese	0	0	0	0
Mašrawan Araḫsamna	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kanun Kislev	Gli dèi saranno adorati e invocati con fervore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ṭebet	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Šebaṭ	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Addar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Testi bizantini

Nei testi bizantini notiamo l'assenza del tema in riferimento ai tuoni, anche se in alcuni testi con apodosi multiple compaiono scarsi riferimenti che potrebbero essere ricondotti alla sfera del divino.

Se non consideriamo che il tuono è la voce di Adad nei testi accadici, allora il nostro testo mandaico è l'unico a presentare questo tema.

1.9 Luoghi citati (toponimi)

Mese	Testo Mandaico	Testo Akk n° 1	Testo Akk n° 2	Testo Akk n° 3	Testo Akk n° 4	Testo Akk n° 5	Testo Akk n° 6	Testo Akk n° 7
Nisan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ayar	Dilum	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Š/Siwan	Bit Hudaiia;	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

	Bit Hdšaiia							
Tammuz Duʾuzu	Paese dei Caldei	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ab	Babilonia; Kadan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Elul	Idem	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tišrin Tešrît	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mašrawan Araḫsamna	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kanun Kislev	Fars	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ṭebet	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Šebaṭ	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Addar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Nei testi accadici come pure in quelli bizantini non sono presenti toponimi ma solo generici riferimenti al "paese" o alla "regione" o al "territorio"; da mettere in evidenza nel bizantino n° 14 "le città costiere" nel mese di giugno.

1.10 Acque

Mese	Testo Mandaico	Testo Akk n° 1	Testo Akk n° 2	Testo Akk n° 3	Testo Akk n° 4	Testo Akk n° 5	Testo Akk n° 6	Testo Akk n° 7
Nisan	0	Rovesci di Adad	0	Piogge	0	0	0	0
Ayar	Pioggia a Dilum	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Š/Siwan	0	0	0	0	0	0	Diluvio	Piena
Tammuz Duʾuzu	Pioggia	0	0	Fine delle piogge	0	0	Tempeste [...] fine delle piogge	0
Ab	0	0	Fine di piogge e piene	Fine delle piene	0	0	0	0

Elul	0	0	Piogge e piene in anticipo	0	Piogge e piene	0	0	Diluvio devastante
Tišrin Tešrît	0	0	Piogge e piene	0	Piogge	0	0	Idem
Mašrawan Araḫsamna	0	0	Piogge	0	0	0	0	0
Kanun Kislev	Grandine	0	Piogge	Fine delle piogge	Grande piena	Piene	Rovesci di Adad	0
Ṭebet	Idem	Piogge nel cielo e piene nelle acque terrestri	0	0	Piena nelle acque terrestri	Piogge	Tempesta	0
Šebaṭ	L'acqua sarà di livello basso. Molta acqua scenderà (pioggia?)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Addar	0	Piogge torrenziali di Adad	Piogge	Piena	0	0	0	0

Testi bizantini

Nei testi bizantini come in quello mandaico e in quelli accadici non ci sono riferimenti alle acque oltre la pioggia, corrispondendo in pieno alla tabella del tema 1 sugli eventi meteorologici.

1.11 Zoologia

Oltre agli animali domestici e selvatici già elencati per le malattie e i parti, sono da citare la presenza nel testo mandaico delle locuste nel mese di Tammuz e dei pesci nei mesi di Šebaṭ e Addar;

le invasioni di locuste in n° 1 a Šebaṭ e leoni e lupi in n° 3 in Addar. Nei testi bizantini non ci sono animali oltre quelli già citati nelle tematiche precedenti.

1.12 Botanica

In tutti e tre i corpora non sono presenti elementi di botanica oltre quelli già citati relativamente alle tematiche agricole.

2. Conclusione

Sebbene qualsiasi conclusione sarebbe azzardatamente prematura, un'attenta lettura delle tabelle mette in evidenza una chiara trasformazione funzionale a discapito della continuità formale, che possiamo così enucleare:

1. Eventi meteorologici
Tutti e tre i corpora pongono grande enfasi sui fenomeni meteorologici. I testi accadici sono ricchi di riferimenti a piogge, venti, tempeste e fulmini. Il testo mandaico elenca gli eventi meteorologici solo in cinque mesi. I testi bizantini trattano il tema con regolarità, soprattutto in relazione al tuono e alla pioggia, ma in modo spesso sintetico.

2. Malattie e pestilenze umane
Presente in tutti e tre i corpora. Nei testi accadici, le malattie sono spesso legate a invasioni o eventi atmosferici. Il testo mandaico le cita in relazione a città o periodi precisi. I testi bizantini riportano il tema più diffusamente, spesso con riferimento a mesi specifici.

3. Malattie e pestilenze animali
Ricorrente nei testi accadici, dove locuste e peste animale sono segnali di crisi. Anche il testo mandaico menziona la morte del bestiame in relazione a specifiche epidemie. I testi bizantini riportano frequentemente malattie del bestiame con un'apparente relazione stagionale.

4. Riproduzione (donne o animali)
Molto presente nei testi accadici, soprattutto in relazione a quelli che sembrerebbero mesi propizi. Poco trattata nel testo mandaico e marginale nei testi bizantini.

5. Guerre, rivolte, tumulti
Ben rappresentati in tutte e tre le tradizioni. I testi accadici sono fortemente focalizzati sul proprio territorio. Il testo mandaico associa guerre a luoghi specifici. I testi bizantini usano spesso formule più generiche.

6. Morte di uomini illustri
Presente nei testi accadici e bizantini (con frequente riferimento a re, principi e notabili). Nel testo mandaico appare meno frequentemente.

7. Produzioni agricole
Tema centrale nei tre corpora. Gli accadici sono i più sistematici, con riferimenti dettagliati a cereali, sesamo, datteri ecc. Il testo mandaico e quelli bizantini usano il raccolto come indicatore di prosperità o crisi.

8. Eventi legati alle divinità
Presente nei testi accadici in relazione alla figura di Adad. Nel testo mandaico vi sono preghiere e invocazioni agli dèi, il che conferisce loro una connotazione religiosa che gli altri non hanno. I testi bizantini sono più reticenti o alludono alla dività solo implicitamente.

9. Luoghi citati
Il testo mandaico è il più ricco in toponimi reali. I testi accadici menzionano genericamente il "paese". I bizantini tendono a evitare riferimenti geografici espliciti.[35]

[35] Questa che sembra una differenza, in realtà non lo è, poiché nei testi bizantini tardi troviamo una cospicua messe di toponimi. Questo dato rende i testi bizantini scelti più vicini agli altri due *corpora*.

10. Acque (fiumi e mari)
Ampia presenza nei testi accadici, con piene e siccità stagionali. Il testo mandaico parla di acque in relazione a piogge o diluvi. Nei testi bizantini le acque sono meno tematizzate. Il mare non compare mai.

11. Zoologia
Ben trattata in tutti e tre i corpora, con riferimento a greggi, locuste, animali selvatici e domestici. Il contesto è quasi sempre quello zoo-agricolo-pastorale.

12. Botanica
Tema molto sviluppato nei testi accadici con ampio lessico agricolo (cerealicolo). Presente anche nei testi mandaici e bizantini, dove si tratta principalmente di grano, frutti e raccolti.

In sintesi, se già conoscevamo la condivisione della struttura mensile, possiamo aggiungere la logica associativa tra i fenomeni naturali e gli eventi "storici", l'ampiezza del vocabolario tecnico (soprattutto agricolo) offerta dai testi accadici,[36] la presenza di una visione "simbolica" nel testo mandaico e la tendenza alla sintesi e alla normatività nei testi bizantini. Possiamo solo concludere dando ancora una volta ragione a Pingree: «Much remains to be done to clarify the interrelationships of all these texts, which are written in virtually every language of Europe and the Near East».[37]

Abbreviazioni

AHW W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1965.
CSDR. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1998.

[36] Nel prossimo articolo si affronterà l'aspetto lessicale.
[37] Pingree 1998, 134, nella sua sintesi sulla trasmissione degli *omina* mesopotamici in appendice al lavoro della Dalley.

DCH D. J.A Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, Sheffield: Sheffield Accademic Press, 1993-2011.
DCPA M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Christian Palestinian Aramaic*, Leuven: Peeters, 2014.
DJBA M. Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University Press, 2002.
DJPA Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University Press, 2002.
DUL G. del Olmo Lete – J. Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*. Third Revised Edition. W. G.E. Watson (Trd. a c.), Leiden: Brill, 2015.
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LS M. Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon. A Translation from the Latin*, Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann's *Lexicon Syriacum*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009.
MD E.S. Drower – R. Macuch, *A Mandaic Dictionary*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1963.
TS R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, Oxonii: Clarendoniano, 1879-1901 (rist. Olms, 1981).

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Yahia Bihram's Narrative Colophons Part 3: Drower Collection 43[1]

MATTHEW MORGENSTERN

This article presents an *editio princeps* and translation of three narrative colophons authored in 1272 AH (= 1855–1856 CE) by the celebrated Mandaean communal leader Yahia Bihram. He appended these accounts to three amulet formulae that he copied on a large rotulus, now MS Drower 43 in the Bodleian Library. The texts describe the turbulent events in his life that occurred shortly after the visit of the orientalist Julius Heinrich Petermann, particularly the pillaging of the Mandaean quarter of Sūq eš-Šiūḵ by Arab tribesmen from the Bani Saʾad, and explain the circumstances in which this unique manuscript was created. The narrative is composed in the characteristic idiom of this genre, i.e., a mixed literary language that combines classicising features with elements drawn from the vernacular. The accompanying notes examine particularly the post-classical elements and their relationship to contemporary Neo-Mandaic (henceforth: NM).

Keywords: Mandaic – Mandaeans – Neo-Mandaic – Neo-Aramaic.

[1] This article is part of an ongoing research project, funded by the Israel Science Foundation grant no. 542/24, to edit and publish the Mandaic magical rotuli. I wish to thank Prof. Hezy Mutzafi for his advice on the Neo-Mandaic materials. Dr. Ohad Abudraham read a draft of this article and made helpful suggestions. Mandaic transliterations are presented according to the system developed by Rudolf Macuch, while Neo-Mandaic is present according to Mutzafi's phonological transcription. Superlinear insertions are marked with carets, e.g. ^**a**^. The names of Mandaic literary works are given in italics, with word-final **–ia** transcribed as *-i* where appropriate, e.g. *Rahmi*. Citations from the *Rbai* Rafid Collection are reproduced by kind permission of the custodian of the collection. The digital images are The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, MS. Drower 43.

1. Introduction

This article is the third in a series of editions and translations of the narrative colophons composed by the Mandaean *yalufa* (learned layman) turned priest and communal leader Yahia Bihram.[2] The three accounts published herein appear on a large rotulus of amulet formulae that is now held by the Bodleian Library as MS. Drower 43 (R). In her personal handlists, Drower referred to the manuscript as the "*Poor Priest's Treasury*", though this title is not supported in any Mandaean sources.[3] Most of its formulae remain unpublished,[4] though it is referenced and cited over 2300 times in Drower's and Macuch's *Mandaic Dictionary* (henceforth: MD) of 1963. The verso of the rotulus is inscribed with excerpts from the Arabic magic work *Šams al-Maʿārif* as well as an unusual description of the telegraph.[5] According to its colophon, the main part of the manuscript was copied in 1272 AH (= 1855–1856 CE). It was thus written some time after Julius Heinrich Petermann's visit to Sūq eš-Šiūḵ between January and April 1854.[6]

[2] The first part was published in Morgenstern 2019a, the second in Morgenstern 2023.

[3] In her personal notebook (now MS Drower 55), Drower described it as "*Poor Priest's Treasury* of 12 ~~of ten ….~~ qmahia with Arabic talismans on the back. The ten are …" etc. This discrepancy regarding the number of talismans that the scroll contains (ten or twelve) arises from the *Tlāṯā Qmāhi* "Three Amulets", which may be counted as one item or three. Ultimately, Drower settled on the ten, and labeled the individual works on the verso with sequential letters – A, B, C, etc. – up to J. This system of reference was also employed in the *Mandaic Dictionary*, wherein the texts are cited as "DC 43 A", "DC 43 J" etc.

[4] However, the manuscript was used in the preparation of preliminary digital editions of all its texts by the author and Dr. Ohad Abudraham that were incorporated into the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon (https://cal.huc.edu/). Previously, part of DC 43's copy of *Qmāhā ḏ-Ṣīr Sahrā* "The Amulet of 'Bound is the *Sahir*'" had been published with a translation and notes in Müller-Kessler 2005, 138-142. Contra Müller-Kessler, *idem* p. 141, DC 43 is a dated manuscript and *Qmāhā ḏ-Ṣīr Sahrā* is not part of *Šaṗlā ḏ-Qaštīnā* "The Scroll of the Archer".

[5] The description of the telegraph is published in Morgenstern 2021, 88-89.

[6] For a summary of Petermann's visit, see Buckley 2010, 121-131. The dates that Petermann provided for his stay accord with those found in two manuscripts that Yahia Bihram copied for him and in which he mentioned Petermann's name

The rotulus itself is of unusually large dimensions for a Mandaean magical manuscript, and was created by combining pre-folded sheets that appear to have been manufactured for regular codices. The folded width of the double page was 40cm, which, when opened and set vertically, created a sheet of 80cm in length. The vertical sheets were cut to a width of between 18.5–19cm. In total, when joined together with underlaps or overlaps, the nine sheets of the rotulus combine to a total length of 6.28 metres. The manuscript's unusually large dimensions may be related to the extraordinary scope of its contents, which bring together an extensive collection of amulet formulae (*qmahi*) and magical collections (*šāṗāṭā*) on a single scroll.[7]

However, when comparing this manuscript to others, a degree of caution is required. While we have an ever-growing corpus of magical texts on incantation bowls and lead lamellae from the pre- and early Islamic periods, there is a gap of almost a thousand years between these epigraphic sources and the first surviving Mandaic magic texts on paper rolls, few of which predate the great cholera epidemic of 1832. Nonetheless, no other Mandaean rotulus contains such an extensive range of magic formulae.[8] The second colophon presented here suggests that Yahia deliberately chose to gather all of these collections into a single compendium, presumably from smaller scrolls like those on which other copies of these works are written.[9]

As was his wont, Yahia Bihram furnished the manuscript with extensive narrative colophons that describe the events of his time.

explicitly: MS Petermann I 155 of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin–Preußischer Kulturbesitz (see Morgenstern forthcoming) and MS Ms.3.978 of the Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire de Strasbourg (see Morgenstern 2019b), both of which are dated to 1270 AH (1853–1854 CE). Drower (*apud* Buckley 2010, 331) mistakenly recorded that DC 43 was also copied in that year, but the date that I have provided here (in Mandaic: ʿ**matin utrin ušubin ^abatar^ alpa**, DC 43 verso l. 235) is the correct one.

[7] For a list of these texts, see Buckley 2010, 330-331.

[8] It is only from the end of the 19th century that we find evidence for Mandaic magical "handbooks" in codex form.

[9] In the same year, Yahia Bihram copied *Šaṗlā ḏ-Bīṯ Mišqal Aini* "The Scroll of 'I Sought to Raise my Eyes'", now manuscript 1W in the Rbai Rafid Collection.

These narratives, which follow the detailed lists of the copying tradition, were composed in the mixed literary idiom widely employed by him and his priestly contemporaries, in which classicizing elements appear alongside widespread Neo-Mandaic grammatical forms, words and phrases (Morgenstern 2017a). The post-classical elements provide us with valuable evidence for his Mandaic vernacular, which, as we shall see, incorporated native Neo-Mandaic developments and extensive borrowings from colloquial Arabic and Persian.

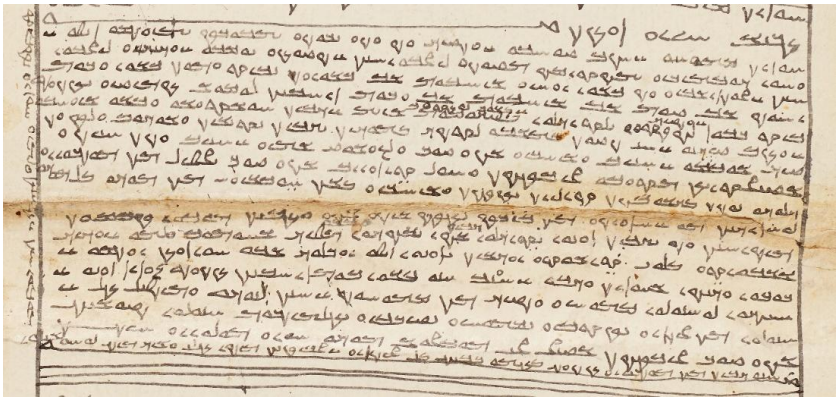
It is my pleasure to dedicate this article to Professor Ricardo Contini, who is truly a Semitist for all seasons.

2 Editions and Translations

The editions are presented in parallel columns. The copying traditions are not cited here and will be presented in complete editions of its amulet formulae that are now in preparation. The text has been divided into sense-units, and brief philological comments are provided in the footnotes. Emphasis is given to the post-classical, i.e., Neo-Mandaic and Arabic uses. The comments are kept brief, and in cases where these late forms have been analysed in detail elsewhere, the reader is directed to those discussions.

2.1 Text 1

The colophon following DC 43A, *Qmāhā ḏ-Ṣīr Sahrā* "The Amulet of 'Bound is the *Sahir*'" and *Qmāhā ḏ-Ṣīr Sahrā Zūṭā* "The Short(er) Amulet of 'Bound is the Sahir'".



Text 1

ansit barqa ḏ-huir abihdia bnia sad alʕabas bmia ḏ-huir	I copied in land of Huwair, with the sons of Saʾad al-ʿAbbās on the waters of Huwair.[10]
anin huinia[11] bsugšiuk mšara girpunan ahal ʂizaiir bnia sad	Now we were in Sūq eš-Šiūḵ (Mušarraḥ).[12] The people[13] of the Jazira pillaged us, the Bani Saʾad[14].
ugṭil mn mandaiia tlata uanin ʿtbarnin šiliin ukipnin abihdia ʿbn ḥarbiah mn mata ʿl mata	And three of the Mandaeans were killed, and we were driven out,[15]

[10] This may be identified with *Al-Huwair,* a settlement on the Euphrates west of Qurna.

[11] NM *həwini* for CM **huinin**. Throughout these texts, Yahia makes frequent use of the NM 1pl. *-ni* morpheme, though sporadic examples are already found in the oldest copy of the *Ginzā Rabbā*. The NM pronoun *ani* "we" appears not to have been employed by Yahia and his contemporaries. See Abudraham 2016, 402; Morgenstern 2017a, 256-257; 2018, 190.

[12] See Morgenstern 2023, 122 n. 25.

[13] Arabic *ʔahel*.

[14] Layard 1846, 45 recorded that the Saʾad were a division of Bani Lām, a dominant tribe in the area. According to the British India Office's *Gazetteer of Arabia* of 1917, (IOR/L/MIL/17/16/2/1, vol. 1, p. 883) the Bani Saʾīd, also known as Bani Saʾad, lived "in the Qadha of Suq ash-Shuyūkh" and "are probably a division of the Muntafik. They are found on the Euphrates between Hammar and Madīnah".

[15] While this could theoretically be an intransitive reflex of *təwárni* "we broke" or perhaps *etwerni* (< Aramaic *t-b-r* 'to break'), it is more likely to be a reflex of the secondary Aramaic root *b-r-y* 'to remove', Dt 'to be removed, to be driven out'. Compare **akandit latbarit mn qudamaihun** "you had not yet left their presence" (The Scroll of the Exorcism of the Evil Eye; my forthcoming edition).

	stripped naked and hungry with the Ibn Ḥarbiyah from town to town.
lahzitun ma ḏ-hzainia mn ridpa ukupna binia bnia akrun marai parqan minaihun	You should not endure[16] what we endured of persecution and famine amongst the sons of Akrun[17]—may my Lord save us[18] from them!
ana utrin zauai ušitlai ^trin^ bnai ubnatai ^arba^ mṭit bhamar alma ḏ-atit bbraiša ʿlau šibaša iatbin uzauai zuṭa iadlat bra	I, with my two wives and my children—my two sons and my four daughters—arrived at Ḥammār[19] until I came to Buraija.[20] We were sitting[21] on[22] a reed couch,[23] and my young wife gave birth to a son.
haizak ianqa ḏ-dadai atunai bhazin atra ḏ-h^a^ur	Then the children[24] of my elder sister[25] brought me[26] to this place of marshlands.

[16] I owe this interpretation to Prof. Hezy Mutzafi, who has informed me that in addition to the sense of 'to see', in NM, the root *h-z-y* also has the meaning of 'to go through (a bad experience), to endure'.

[17] The lord of the underworld in Mandaean lore.

[18] For the NM 1pl. object suffix *-an* in these texts, see Morgenstern 2017a, 258; 2023, 122.

[19] A settlement east of Suq eš-Šiuḵ.

[20] Unknown place.

[21] Compare the short NM 1pl. imperfective form *našqén* "we kiss" (Mutzafi 2015, 326). The root *y-t-b* no longer serves in NM, wherein it has been superseded by the root *y-h-m*. See Mutzafi and Morgenstern 2012, 163–164 and Morgenstern 2018, 197.

[22] NM *əlāw* for CM ʿ**lauia**; compare Macuch 1989, 243; 1993, 400; Häberl 2009, 316. In Ahvaz NM, it is employed only with pronominal suffixes, e.g. *əlāwi*, while NM *elɔ* is used before substantives, but Häberl has recorded examples of *əlāw* in both contexts in the NM of Khorramshahr.

[23] Drower 1962, 136 relates that *kibaša* or *čibaša* refers to a couch of reeds, but the term is also used in Southern Iraq to refer to a marsh dwelling built of bulrushes and reeds. Hezy Mutzafi informs me that *čəbɔšɔ* is used in contemporary NM in both of these senses. Accordingly, the text may refer to a such marsh dwelling, in which case we may translate "I came to Buraija so we could dwell on a *čəbɔšɔ*".

[24] The verb is in plural, and so the noun has been interpreted here as classical *yanqa* 'her children'.

[25] NM *dāde*; see Mutzafi 2014, 89 n. 273.

[26] NM *aṯonne* for CM **uatiun**. See Morgenstern 2017a, 257-258.

hua rbai ramzihrun kinianh ʿaziz zaua ḏ-huntai lahualai qmahia ansit mn qmahana ḏ-hun luatḫ	Rbai Rām Zihrun of the family of ʿAziz is the husband of my younger sister.[27] I[28] did not have amulets. I copied from the amulets[29] that were in his possession.
aminṭul kul ḏ-hualai mn ginzia upišria uqmahia usidria ukulmindam hualai nsabunu bnia sad	Because all that I had of *Ginza*s and exorcisms and amulets and books—and everything that I had—the Bani Saʾad took.[30]
girpunan bsug gu margab mata hiia malaiia hinun	They pillaged us in Sūq (eš-Šiūḵ), in[31] the Margab quarter—Life is the fulfiller!
hua trin mn manduiia kinianu ʿkuma drunu ʿl ginizia ḏ-gripiun minai kulu abit minu lahabulai maraihun ḏ-kulhun almia hazia upariš	There were two Mandowis,[32] of the family Ekuma. They took[33] the *Ginza*s[34] that they plundered from me, all of them. I asked[35] (for them) from them,[36] (but) they did not give them to me.[37] The Lord of all words sees and understands.

[27] *MD* 136 erroneously glossed this "cousin". For the correct interpretation, see Morgenstern 2017b, 161 n. 101.

[28] NM *la həwɔle* for CM **lahualia**. On the use of the NM pronoun *-e* in 19th century texts, see Morgenstern 2017a, 255.

[29] The noun here bears in NM plural morpheme *-ɔnɔ*. See Macuch 1965, 224-225; 1989, 61; 1993, 61-62; Häberl 2009, 318 and Morgenstern 2010, 517-518.

[30] This appears to be a hybrid form of the CM root *n-s-b* 'to take' and the NM 3mpl. morpheme+3mpl. object *-onnu* (see Morgenstern 2017, 261–262). Contra Macuch 1989, 239, the root *n-s-b* is not attested in the Neo-Mandaic texts published by De Morgan; Macuch's reading of **nasba** is based on De Morgan's blurred reproduction, while examination of the source reveals the correct reading to be **parahana**.

[31] NM *go* for CM **bgu**.

[32] The Mandowi are a Mandaean clan. Correct accordingly my translation of Yahia Bihram's colophon to DC 35 (Morgenstern 2019a, 386): **haizak atun manduia ganzibra utar|mida hda ṣagur hurina šabuṭ tarmida** "Then came Mandowi, a *ganziḇra*, and a *tarmida*, the one was Ṣaḡur (and) the other, Šabbuṯ the *tarmida*".

[33] NM *dəronnu* for CM ***drunun**; compare, e.g., **qrunun** "they called them" (Nöldeke 1875, 291).

[34] Or perhaps used more generally here as "treasures", holy books.

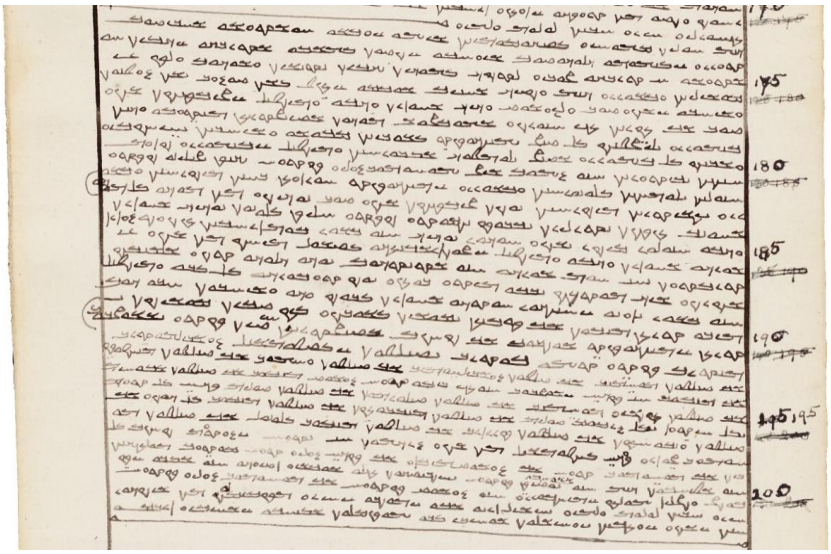
[35] NM *əbít*, as though from the root *ʔ-b-y*. See Morgenstern 2018, 192.

[36] NM *mennu*.

[37] In the recorded NM dialects of Ahvaz and Khorramshahr, this would be *w-la hawonne*. Compare e.g., Macuch 1989, 118 l. 249: *u-hawlonni* "und gaben sie ihm"; Macuch 1993, 280 l. 1641 *hawlonni gallɔ u-tarɔṯ* "gaben him Schafe und Häberl 2009, 292: *hawlonni ya tafšɔ rabbi* "They gave him a large stew pot".

2.2 Text 2

The colophon following DC 43I, *Qmāhā ḏ-Šuḇā* "The Amulet of the Seven (Planets).



Text 2

tum ansit bhuir barqa ḏ-ḳiṭ ʿbn saʕad ubn ʕaṭuan abihdḫ ḏ-bnia sad alʕabas	Furthermore, I copied (this) in the Huwair in the territory of Ḳīṭ son of Saʿad and Ibn ʿAṭuān with the Bani Saʾad al-ʿAbbās.
atit bhazin atra aminṭul ḏ-girpunan bnia sad br ḳaiun kḏ huainia bmargab matan bsiugšiuk mušara	I came to this place because the Bani Saʾad son of Ḳayūn pillaged us when we were in our quarter of Margab, in Sūq eš-Šiūḳ, Mučarrah (Mušarraḥ).
atun rumaiia ulagṭuna ʿl sug umuntapiš̈ ʿbadiun qraba abihdun uḫiṣaria abduna ʿl rumaiia bsug ulamṭat bʿdaihun	The Turks came and seized Sūq (eš-Šiūḳ), and the Muntafiq[38] battled against them; they laid a siege[39] on the Turks in Sūq (eš-Šiūḳ), but they did not succeed,

[38] The spelling **muntapiš̈** reflects the colloquial form *muntafič*.

[39] Arabic/Persian *ḥiṣār*; the phrasal verb is a calque on Persian *ḥiṣār kardan* "To lay siege to" (Steingass 1892, 421).

aminṭul ḏ-rumaiia nazam hunun urišaihun hua ʕumar big umahamad ʕalia pašah
because the Turks are the regime[40] and their leaders are ʿOmar Bey and Muhammad ʿAli Pašah.

utup ugulila napša hualun ulamṣun ʿlauaihun arbaiia ḏ-muntapiš
And they had much artillery (lit: canon and ball)[41] and the Muntafiq Arabs could not defeat them.

haizak dhun minaihun arbaiia ukbišiun minaihun
Then they repelled the Arabs from them and captured some of them.

uanin girpunan bnia sad uatinia mn mata ʿl mata bhaur kipnin ušiliin urdapa unqaša napša hlip ʿlauan
And as for us – the Bani Saʾad pillaged us and we went from town to town in the marshlands, hungry and stripped naked, and great persecution and smiting came upon us.

uatit bhazin atra hualai qinai ubnia hatai
So I came to this place – I had my family and my sister's children (with me).

uatit hua rbai ramzihrun kinianḫ ʕaziz baitḫ bhazin atra
And I came; Rbai Rām Zihrun of the family of ʿAzīz had his house in this place.

aminṭul ḏ-ganzibrukta ʿsbal mihna mn bnia ḏ-širšan uhu ham baitḫ hua bšuštar uata tlata šnia bqurna
Because the priesthood[42] had suffered tribulations from our co-religionists and his home too[43] was in Šuštar, but he came for three years to Qurna.

bnainia bit maškna udra miša dakia uana šaraitḫ ʿl ʿdḫ aminṭul hua rbai uzauḫ ḏ-huntai
We built a cult-hut and he took pure oil, and I consecrated his hand. Because he was my Master and my younger sister's spouse.

hašta bhazin ʿdana ata abihdan hda tarmida šik muran br paruk uqabin ʿbadnia ʿka srin qabinan
Then at that time, one *tarmida* came with us, Sheikh Mūrān son of Farroḳ,

[40] Possibly, the meaning is that these were troops of the *Nizam-i Cedid* army.

[41] MD misunderstood this passage. On p. 93. s.v. **glila**, it was translated "and they had much shame and vagrancy", while p. 483 s.v. **tup** derives its lemma from Arabic/Persian *tuf* "pah, pooh, ugh, shame!". However, the phrase is to be derived from the Turkish *top ve gülle*. Compare further Persian *gulūla'i topī* "a cannon-ball; a shot" (Steingass 1892, 1096).

[42] NM *ganzewroxtɔ*; on the shift CM *-ūṯā* > NM *oxtɔ*, see already Nöldeke 1875, 78. Nöldeke was unacquainted with the vernacular, in which the shift is absolute. There is considerable evidence to suggest that it occurred already in the vernacular of the Sassanid or early Islamic period (see Abudraham 2018, 83-88) and it fairly common from the earliest colophons (see also Morgenstern 2018, 199-201).

[43] Persian *ham*, characteristic of late Mandaic texts. See MD 122 s.v.

and we performed a marriage. There (were)[44] twenty marriages.[45]

ušik ḏ-muntapiš̈ bandar br naṣir bsugšiuk ^uhi^sin paša ubbagdad mušir paš̈a šumḥ rašid

And the Sheikh of the Muntafiq was Bandar son of Nāṣir in Sūq eš-Šiūḳ and Hisin Paša, and in Baghdad the advisor and in Baghdad the name of the Mušīr Paša's is Rašīd.

usulṭan ḏ-ʿsṭambul ʕabdilmašid br sulṭan mahmud br slṭan ʕabdilḥamid br sulṭan ahmad br sulṭan muṣṭapa br murad hu patḥ ḏ-bagdad hua kḏ̈ dira šah ʕabas murad br sulṭan brahim br sulṭan kanbia maḥmud br sulṭan sulaiman br sulṭan salim pth ʿl šam uʿl hiš̈az uʿl ʕiraq salim br sulṭan murdaḳan br sulṭan murad ʿl tania br sulṭan aurahkan br sulṭan paiizid br sulṭan murad ʿlaual br sulṭan mahamad g̈azia p^a^tḥ ʿṣṭambul mn bnia ʕitman hu

And the Sultan of Istanbul[46] is ʿAbdul Majīd son of Sultan Maḥmūd son of Sultan ʿAbdul Ḥamīd son of Sultan Aḥmad son of Sultan Muṣṭafa son of Murād, the conqueror (*fattāḥ*) of Baghdad; and this happened when Shah ʿAbbas seized it, Murād son of Sultan Ibrahim son of Sultan Çelebi[47] Mahmud son of Sultan Suleiman son of Sultan Selim, the conqueror of Syria (aš-Šām) and the Hijaz and Iraq; (i.e.) Selim son of Sultan Murada Khan son of Sultan Murād II son of Sultan Awrakan[48] son of Sultan Bayezid son of Sultan Murād I son of Sultan Muḥammad (Mehmet) Ġāzi, the conqueror of Istanbul from the sons of Othman.

ušah ḏ-ʕaš^a^m naṣir ʿl din br maḥamad šah br ʕabasmirza br patḥ ʕalia šah qaš̈ar malkutun hua bṭihran

And the Shah of the Persians is Naṣir id-Dīn son of Muḥammad Shah son of ʿAbbās Mirza son of Fatḥ ʿAli Shah Qajar. Their dominion is in Teheran.

tum hua bbaṣra uasip pašah

Moreover, in Basra there is Vasıf Paša.

uhindustan kulḫ barbia zauiata hua bʿda ḏ-p̈arang angliz

And all of Hindustan to its four corners is in the hands of the English Europeans.[49]

[44] Prof. Hezy Mutzafi has suggested that this could be NM *əkkɔ* 'there is' (< Babylonian Aramaic/CM *ʔikkā*) or *ekɔ́* 'like this, thus.'

[45] NM *qowwinɔ́n*.

[46] For notes on this list of the Ottoman rulers, compare Morgenstern 2019, 387-388. Yahia employs a combination of the Arabic, Turkish and Persian forms of the names in his lists.

[47] Here written **kanbia**, but the parallel list in DC 35: **kalbia**.

[48] In DC 35, this name is written **ab ʿrdakan**. Neither name accords with an Ottoman ruler.

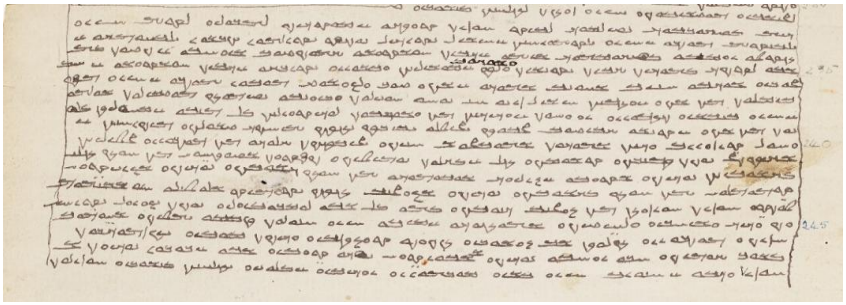
[49] For **p̈arang** (the **p** is marked with the diacritic to indicate the fricative pronunciation) compare Persian *farang*.

umalka ḏ-miṣraiia hua ʕabas pašah br mahamad ʕalia pašah
hiia hdun lalam almia uhibil ziua bra ḏ-manda ḏ-hiia mpariqlan binataihun ḏ-bnia ḏ-akrun uiahiblan bahidi ʿda umapiqlan bʿuhra ḏ-bhiria zidqa

And the king of Egypt is ʿAbbās Paša son of Muḥammad ʿAli Paša.
Life rejoiced for all eternity and may Hiḇil Zīwā, the son of the Knowledge-of-Life redeem us amongst the sons of Akrun and set us amongst the supported and take us out through the path of the chosen of righteousness.

2.3 Text 3

The colophon following DC 43J, *Qmāhā ḏ-Qaštīnā* "The Amulet of the Archer"



Text 3

marai umanda ḏ-hiia mpariqlan mn bnia ḏ-akrun hibil ziua hu uahḥ̲auilan adiaura usimaka masqilan balma ḏ-hiia rurbia nukraiia

May[50] God[51] and the Knowledge-of-Life redeem us from the Sons of Akrun; may Hiḇil Zīwā, he and his brothers, be a saviour and support for us, (and) may they raise us up to the land of the Great and Sublime Life.

ia ahan ḏ-atitun mn abatran latišailun ʿl mura ḏ-qhalip ʿlauan mn bnia ḏ-šuba utrisar

O our brothers that come after us, do not ask about the bitterness[52] that is befalling[53] us from the sons of the Seven (planets) and the Twelve (constellations).

[50] On the optative use of the imperfective, see Macuch 1993, 69–70 and Häberl 2009, 246.

[51] See Mutzafi 2014, 186-187.

[52] See **miḫna umura** "tribulation and bitterness" (CP 354:31).

[53] On the increased use of the *qp-* prefix on imperfective in post-classical Mandaic texts, see Morgenstern 2018, 191 and 2019b, 36.

grapa ugiṭla uridpa ukupna umihnat sbalnia minaihun ḏ-ahal ṣizaiir atun bmatan bmargab huinia ugirpunan utlata mn mandaiia gṭiliun btipang	We have endured pillaging and killing and persecution and famine and tribulation[54] from the people of the Jazira. They came into our quarter – we were in Margab – and they pillaged us and killed three of the Mandaeans with a musket.[55]
uanin prudnia šbaqnia kul ḏ-ʿtlan uamiṭinia napšan bsapḥah.	And we fled.[56] We left everything that we had and took ourselves to Safḥa.[57]
mn haka kulu ʿtbariun uatinia bšara ḏ-ʕiliat baramata umn haka tbarnia uatinia bʕiuiṣah ṣmamlah	From here they all left, and we came to the region of ʿiliat, to the heights. And from there we left and came to ʿIweja,[58] Čam-ʔamlāh/āḥ.[59]
umn haka ʿtbarnia uatinia bʕagur kupna ušamiš blaṭula hua bʿumam ṭanṣa hazin	From there we were driven out and went to ʿAqr.[60] There was hunger and sun with no shade during these *panja*[61] days.
haizak mn ʕagur tuarnia ʿma ʿl bra laqdarialia uanin uʕaial uṣihil	Then we were driven out of ʿAqr – a mother (could not) carry her son—we and our families and children.[62]
ana atit abihdia alḥisinia bmakuata ḏ-qira	I came with the al-Ḥusseini in a pitch-(lined) raft.
hiia hualan pirqa umṭinia bḥatar	The Life was our salvation, and we arrived in Ḥatar[63]

[54] Yahia has here used the Persian form *mihnat* rather than the more common Mandaic loan-form from Arabic *miḥna*.

[55] NM *tofáng* (Macuch 1993, 443), Persian *tufang*, Turkish *tüfenk*.

[56] NM *ṗərɔdni* (see Mutzafi 2014, 102, 187). MD 387 s.v. **PRD II** adduces our example and a questionable text from DC 46 (a formularly for *Qmāhā ḏ-Nirig*). It is otherwise employed in this sense primarily in colophons, e.g., **umandaia ḏ-šuštar prudiun uzgun bmḥamra** "And the Mandaeans of Šuštar fled and went to Muḥammara", colophon to DC 51 composed in 1277 AH (1860–1861 CE) by Yahia Bihram's brother-in-law, Rām Zihrun.

[57] There is a town al-Safḥa west of Amara, but it is unclear if this is the Safḥa to which our author is referring.

[58] An area of this name (*Qaryat al-ʿUwayjah*) is located north of the Euphrates between al-Baṭḥāʾ and al-Ḵiḍir.

[59] I have not been able to identify this toponym, and the reconstruction of the Arabic name is hypothetical.

[60] Hypothetical reconstruction.

[61] For *ṭanj(ɔ)* as a colloquial pronunciation earlier *panja* (MD 361 s.v. **panṣa**, 'the five intercalary days') see Macuch 1993, 318, l. 1925.

[62] NM from Arabic *jihəl* (Mutzafi 2014, 163). The loanword **ṣihl** (= *jihl*), plural **ṣihlanai** (= *jihlāne*) is already attested in the Leiden *Glossarium* 68, 14 but in its original sense of Latin *stultus*, Arabic جاهل.

[63] Or Ḥaṭar. The place is unknown to me.

hzinia mandaiia kalap br ʕabadia kinianḫ šaʕpuria	We saw a Mandaean, Ḳalaf son of ʿAbadia, family name Jaʕfūri.
atinan qaria ukizmatdan ʿbad utaminia hda iahra uatinia ^b^braiṯah	He brought us to his place and attended to us, and we stayed for one month and came to Buraija.[64]
uata ṯaria bra ḏ-dadai uatian hazi^n^ atra ḏ-huair	And Čari, the son of my elder sister came, and he brought us[65] to this place of Huwair.
hiia rbia qadmaiia iatiria ḏ-ʿlauia (u)kulhun ʿubadia hazilan	May the great primordial outstanding Life that is above all deeds see us!

3. Conclusion

Yahia Bihram's three colophons relate in slightly different terms the same events: the pillaging of the Mandaean quarter of Sūq eš-Šiūḳ, and his flight with this family to the marshlands. The narratives also explain the circumstances in which this unique compendium of Mandaic magical formulae was created: his library had stolen and Yahia sought to replace it by copying texts in the possession of his brother-in-law, Rām Zihrun. In doing so, he created an important textual witness to the texts that it contains.

In addition, the texts provide us with further insights into the linguistic milieu of the Mandaeans in the first half of the 19th century. As we read, the Mandaeans were moving between Iran and Iraq and in contact with Arabic and Persian, most frequently in their spoken forms. The written Mandaic of this period reflects these various elements, but the lack of dictionaries of these vernaculars from the Ottoman period sometimes hinders our ability to reach a certain interpretation of words and expressions that their authors employed.

[64] On this passage, see in detail Morgenstern 2017a, 259. The expression **kizmatdan ʿbad** reflects a phrasal verb *ḳizmet* "service" (Persian loanword) + NM possessive *-dan* + Mandaic verb *ə̄wad* "he did".

[65] This is probably NM *aṭian* "he brought us". Alternatively, this could be interpreted as "he brought me", a classicism that would have been familiar to the author from the prayers, e.g. **gabra ḏ-atian lhaka** "the man who brought me to here" (CP 134:10-11 // ML 164:5).

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The Neo-Aramaic dialect of Mawana[1]

GEOFFREY KHAN

This paper presents a brief overview of the hitherto undocumented Christian Neo-Aramaic dialect spoken in the village of Mawana and the surrounding area, in northwestern Iran. It includes a description of the distinctive phonological, morphological and lexical features of the dialect, which will soon be further expanded in a full grammar and lexicon of the dialect.

Keywords: Neo-Aramaic – Mawana -NENA dialects – Iran – grammar

1. The Dialect of Mawana

The dialect of the Christians of Mawana (henceforth C. Mawana) and the surrounding villages in the rural districts of Targawar and Margawar in northwestern Iran belongs to the North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA) subgroup of Neo-Aramaic. It is closely related to the Christian Urmi (henceforth C. Urmi) dialect, which was spoken on the Urmi plain and the town of Urmi.[2] There are, however, several differences. In many cases, the C. Mawana dialect shares these features that differ from C. Urmi with adjacent Christian NENA dialects spoken to the west of Targawar in southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq.

[1] It is a pleasure to offer this article to Riccardo Contini as a token of thanks for his inspiring contributions to the field of Semitic linguistics and for his friendship.

[2] For the C. Urmi dialect, see Khan 2016.

In this paper I give an overview of the distinctive features of the C. Mawana dialect. This is based on fieldwork that I undertook among speakers of the dialect in Australia and the USA. A full grammar and text corpus of the dialect are in preparation. In some of the examples below the numbering relates to this so-far unpublished text corpus.

2. Phonology

2.1 Palatisation of Dorsal Consonants

In C. Mawana, the reflex of *k is either an aspirated palatal stop /c/ [cʰ] or an aspirated post-alveolar affricate /č/ [ʧʰ], and the reflex of *g is a voiced palatal stop reflex /ɟ/ [ɟ or ɟ̱] or a lamino-post-alveolar affricate reflex /j/ [ʤ]. In C. Urmi, these different reflexes are regional varieties (northern vs southern Urmi plain). In C. Mawana, however, the different reflexes correlate with specific lexical items, e.g.[3]

	C. Mawana	C. Urmi
'tooth'	caca	cica/čiča
'broom'	cănüšta	canušta/čanušta
'dog'	čalba	calba/čalba
'vineyard'	čarma	carma/čarma
'wall'	ɟüda	ɟuyda/juyda
'roof'	ɟare	ɟarə/jarə
'soul'	jana	ɟana/jana
'side'	jeba	ɟiba/jiba

Most of the Christian dialects of the Baz region in southeastern Turkey and the closely related Rekan dialect exhibit lexically

[3] In this paper I transcribe NENA dialects with the transcriptions system that I use in my grammars. Most vowels in open syllables are long and most vowels in closed syllables are short, so to minimise diacritical signs I do not put diacritics on long vowels in open syllables or on short vowels in closed syllable. I add a breve sign on a short vowel in an open syllable and a macron on a long vowel in a closed syllable.

specific palatal affrication of *k and *g, predominantly before /a/, in a range of lexical items that corresponds closely to that of C. Mawana, with some variations. When these dorsal consonants remain stops, they are articulated in the region of the velum and so are transcribed /k/ and /g/:[4]

	'orchard' < *karma	'dog' < *kalba	'liver' < *kawda	'daughter-in-law' < *kalθa	'tooth' < *kaka
Argab	čarma	čalwa	čawda	čăla	čeka
Bi-Sillem	čarma	čalwa	čawda	čăla	čeka
Maha Xtaya	čarma	čalwa	čawda	čăla	čeka
Šawwa	čarma	čalwa	čawda	čăla	čeka
Rekan	čarma	čalba	čawda	čăla	keka

	'bone' < *garma	'man' < *ˁgawra
Argab	jarma	ˁjawra ~ ˁgʸawra
Bi-Sillem	jarma	ˁjawra[5]
Maha Xtaya	jarma	ˁjawra
Šawwa	jarma	ˁjawra
Rekan	jarma	ˁjawra

In most other lexical items, /k/ and /g/ do not undergo affrication, e.g.,

	'king'	'place'	'snow'	'roof'
Argab	malka	duka	talga	gare
Bi-Sillem	malka	duka	talga	gare
Maha Xtaya	malka	duka	talga	gare
Śawwa	malka	duka	talga	gare
Rekan	malka	duka	talga	gare

Napiorkowska has found that in Christian dialects originally spoken in the Šamizdīn (Turkish: Şemdinli; Kurdish: Şemzînan)

[4] The following data are mainly taken from fieldnotes. Some of the data for the Maha Xtaya dialect are taken from Mutzafi 2000.

[5] The symbol ˁ marks suprasegmental pharyngealisation of the word. See §2.6 below.

region in southeastern Turkey to the west of Targawar and surrounding areas now in northern Iraq, palatisation of dorsals was more systematic across the lexicon than in C. Mawana and the Baz dialects.[6] Moreover, there was a wide range of realisations of the palatalisation, ranging from a palatal offset ([kʲ], [gʲ]), to palato-alveolar affricates ([ʧʰ], [ʤ]) and alveolar affricates ([ʦ], [ʣ]), e.g.,

'dog' čalba [kʲalba] ~ [ʧʰalba] ~ [ʦælba]
'grass' jəḷḷa [gʲəlˁlˁa] ~ [ʤəlˁlˁa] ~ [ʣəlˁlˁa]

2.2 Lack of Elision of /t/

In C. Urmi /t/ after an /a/ vowel is optionally elided in the feminine plural ending of nouns. The /t/ derives historically from the interdental *θ. This elision does not take place in C. Mawana:

C. Mawana	C. Urmi
'villages' ⁺matwate	matvatə ~ matvay

In this respect, C. Mawana corresponds more closely with dialects lying immediately to the west in the Šamizdīn region, in which the */t/ has been retained in the suffix, e.g.

Mar Bišu:	-ate
Iyyel:	-ate
Nočiya:	-ate
Zariwaw:	-ate

This region is surrounded by Christian dialects in which the /t/ has been weakened to /h/ or elided in this suffix,[7] e.g.

-ahe (Dīz)
-a (Baz, Jilu, Rekan, Barwar d-Qučanəṣ, Gawar, Saṛa, Van)

[6] Napiorkowska 2015, 18-20.
[7] Talay 2008, 69.

In C. Salamas, the ending is -ay (e.g. maváy 'villages'), which corresponds to the variant form of the suffix with elided /t/ in C. Urmi.

2.3 Front /ü/

A conspicuous feature of the C. Mawana vowel system is the front rounded /ü/ [y, ʏ] vowel. This corresponds to historical long and short *ū/u:

	C. Mawana	C. Urmi	C. Salamas
'apple' (*ḥabbūšā)	xabü̆ša	xabúyša	xabúxša
'wall' (*gūddā)	ɟü̆da	ɟúyda	ɟúġda
'stew' (*buššālā)	⁺bü̆šála	bušála	bušala

As can be seen, the reflex of long stressed *ū in C. Urmi is /uy/ with a palatal offglide and in C. Salamas the reflex has a velar fricative offglide /ux/, /uġ/. The fronting of the *ū/u in C. Mawana is blocked when followed by a dorsal consonant and in such conditions C. Urmi and C. Salamas has /u/ without an offglide:

	C. Mawana	C. Urmi	C. Salamas
'spirit' (*rūḥā)	⁺roxa	⁺ruxa	⁺ruxa
'market' (*šūqā)	šoḵa	šuḵa	šuḵa

A front /ü/ is found in other NENA dialects of eastern Iraq and the region of Šamizdīn in southeastern Turkey.[8] This is an areal feature of the region shared by the Kurdish dialects in southeastern Turkey and northwestern Iran, and in the Bahdini Kurdish dialect of northern Iraq.[9]

[8] Talay 2008, 127; Napiorkowska 2015, 26-27.
[9] Haig 2019, §4.1.2.

*2.4 Raising of *a*

In a number of words in C. Urmi, /i/ in an open syllable has developed by raising from *a in an originally closed syllable, usually before a geminated consonant. In most such cases C. Mawana has retained the original /a/, e.g.

	C. Mawana	C. Urmi	Historical form
'tooth'	caca	cica	*kakkā
'stomach'	časa	cisa	*karsā

This process of raising is more systematic in dialects lying to the north and northwest of Targawar, such as C. Salamas and C. Van:

	C. Mawana	C. Urmi	C. Salamas/C. Van
'daughter'	brata	brata	brita
'pleasant'	băsima	basima	bisima

2.5 Syllable Structure

Unlike in C. Urmi, an open syllable with a short vowel rhyme (CV) is licit in C. Mawana. C. Urmi repairs such syllables by secondary gemination or the lengthening of the short rhyme vowel, e.g.

	C. Mawana	C. Urmi
'wax'	šăma	šamma
'pleasant'	băsima	basima [baːˈsiːma]

2.6 Suprasegmental Emphasis

C. Mawana shares with C. Urmi the feature of suprasegmental emphasis (pharyngealisation), which is marked in the transcription by the symbol ˠ. The distribution of this feature in the lexicon of C. Mawana, however, is different from that of C. Urmi. The distribution in the lexicon of C. Mawana corresponds to what is found in neighbouring dialects in the Targawar and Margawar regions, such as C. Tazačand, e.g.

	C. Mawana	C. Tazačand	C. Urmi
'village'	+mata	+mata	mata
'tree'	+ʾilana	+ʾilana	ʾilana
'gum'	data	data	+data
'lamp'	šraya	šraya	+šraya

Verbs containing a historical pharyngeal are generally plain in C. Mawana but emphatic in C. Urmi. C. Mawana corresponds in this respect to other NENA dialects in the Targawar, Margawar and Šamizdīn regions and also in dialects further west in the Ṭyare cluster (including C. Barwar)[10] and on the Mosul plain, in which the historical pharyngeal has not induced emphasis:

	C. Mawana	C. Barwar	C. Alqoš[11]	C. Urmi
'he hears'	šāme	šāme	šame	+šammə

In dialects between Šamizdīn and Ṭyare, such as Jilu, Baz and Rekan, verbs in of this type are generally emphatic:

	C. Jilu[12]	C. Baz (Aruntus)	C. Rekan
'he hears'	šama	+šame	+šammə

This correlation between C. Mawana and dialects further west beyond Baz, Jilu and Rekan may be evidence supporting Maclean's claim that the Aramaic-speaking inhabitants of Targawar were migrants from Tyare.[13] Furthermore, according to one informant, Mawana was founded by migrants from Alqoš.

2.7 Assimilatory Processes

In C. Mawana the initial consonants of verbal inflectional suffixes exhibit a greater tendency to assimilate to the adjacent consonant of verbal bases than in C. Urmi. This applies to the /l/ of

[10] For the C. Barwar dialect, see Khan 2008.
[11] For the C. Alqoš dialect, see Coghill 2003.
[12] For the C. Jilu dialect, see Fox 1997.
[13] Maclean 1895, xiv.

inflectional L-suffixes, which express the agent of past perfective verbs or the object of verbs derived from the present base, and also to the /w/ of the past-shifting suffix -wa, e.g.

	C. Mawana	C. Urmi
'he opened'	ptəx-xe	ptəx-lə
'he opens it (m.)'	patəx-xe	patəx-lə
'he used to open'	patəx-xa	patəx-va

C. Mawana shares this feature with other dialects in the Šamizdīn region, such as Mar-Bišu[14] and Zariwaw.[15]

3 Morphology

3.1 Demonstrative Pronouns

C. Mawana has sets of demonstrative pronouns with optional augments that are distinct from the sets used in C. Urmi:

C. Mawana Independent Near Deixis Pronouns

sg.m	wa	wa̋ha	wa̋hane
sg.f	ya	ya̋ha	ya̋hane
pl	na	na̋ha	na̋hane

C. Urmi

sg.m	ʾa	ʾaha
sg.f	ʾa	ʾaha
pl	ʾannə	

C. Mawana Independent Far Deixis Pronouns

sg.m	wɔ	wɔ́ha	wɔ́hane
sg.f	yɔ	yɔ́ha	yɔ́hane
pl	nɔ	nɔ́ha	nɔ́hane

[14] Talay 2008, 252.
[15] Napiorkowska 2015, 189, 197.

C. Urmi

sg.m	+ʾavva
sg.f	ʾayya
pl	ʾannə

The sets of pronouns attested in C. Mawana have been documented in neighbouring Christian dialects in the Targawar and Šamizdin region, e.g. Ḳ̆alla, Darband, Mar Bišu.

C. Mawana also has the near demonstrative form ʾati, which is of common gender and does not take augments. It is related historically to near deixis common gender pronouns found in dialects further to the west such as C. Anqosh ʾaði, C. Ankawa ʾadi and forms such as C. Telkepe ʾayi and C. Baṭnaya, C. Tisqopa ʾay, in which the medial alveolar has been elided.

3.2 Interrogative Pronouns

The C. Mawana interrogative pronoun ʾɛni 'which?' is shared by other dialects of Targawar and groups with dialects further west in Ṭyare and northern Iraq rather than with C. Urmi:

C. Mawana	C. Ashitha[16]	C. Barwar	C. Hamziye	C. Tən[17]	C. Urmi
ʾɛni	ʾɛni	ʾɛni	ʾeni	ʾɛni	ʾəmna

3.3 3pl S-suffix

In C. Mawana the 3pl S-suffix on strong verbs is -ɛ. This has been extended by analogy from final-weak verbs. C. Urmi, by contrast, retains the original 3pl S-suffix -i on strong verbs and this has been extended by analogy to final-weak verbs, e.g.,

	C. Mawana	C. Urmi
'they open'	patxɛ	patxi
'they drink'	šatɛ	šati

[16] For the dialect of C. Ashitha, see Borghero 2005.
[17] For the dialect of C. Tən, see Coghill 2025.

A similar analogical process of the extension of 3pl S-suffixes of final-weak verbs to strong verbs is found in Jewish dialects in the adjacent region, such as J. Salamas and J. Gawar, e.g.

	J. Salamas	J. Gawar
'they open'	patxe	patxe
'they drink'	šate	šate

3.4 Habitual Particle

The particle that is combined with present-base verbs to express the indicative habitual is ʾi- in C. Mawana, whereas in C. Urmi this generally has the form ci-:

	C. Mawana	C. Urmi
'he opens (habitually)'	ʾi-patəx	ci-patəx

The ʾi- indicative habitual prefix is found in NENA dialects across southeastern Turkey to the west of Targawar, e.g.

C. Zariwaw	C. Baz (Aruntus)	Ṭyare	C. Harbole
ʾi-patəx	ʾi-patəx	ʾi-paθəx	ʾi-patəx

One speaker inflects the progressive base with the nominal plural ending -e when the subject of the construction is plural, e.g.,

p̂ṯ-awɛ́wa p̂ḵàye.|
'They would be popping.' (B3:124).

This feature has been documented in some dialects spoken in the eastern half of northern Iraq, such as C. Shaqlawa.[18]

[18] Khan 2022, 209-210.

4. Lexicon

There are a variety of differences between the lexicon of C. Mawana and that of C. Urmi, e.g.

	C. Mawana	C. Urmi
'churn'	⁺ɟüda	⁺meta
'milk'	xəlya	⁺xalva
'ant'	zanzarita	šəcvana
'to watch'	⁺răye	ɟašək̰
'to speak'	⁺sawote	hamzəm
'to take (away)'	nabəl II	labəl II

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Ausgestorbene und veraltete Wörter im Neuwestaramäischen

WERNER ARNOLD

The present article offers a compilation of extinct or obsolete lexical items, documented during my residence (1985–1987) in the Aramaic-speaking villages of the Qalamūn mountain range in Syria. The list highlights the progressive replacement with Arabic loanwords of native Aramaic vocabulary as well as earlier borrowings from various Eastern and European languages in Northwestern Aramaic.

Keywords: Western Aramaic dialects – Aramaic vocabulary – Arabic loanwords – Historical lexicography studies – Aramaic dialectology.

1. Einleitung

Mein lieber Freund und Kollege Riccardo Contini hat immer großes Interesse am Neuaramäischen gezeigt. Vor fast 30 Jahren bat er mich um einen Zeitungsartikel über die Aramäer in der Gegenwart, der in seiner Übersetzung unter dem Titel *Gli ultimi vivono oggi in Europa* am 1. Oktober 1995 in der angesehenen italienischen Tageszeitung *Il Sole 24 Ore* erschien. Riccardo Contini gehört meines Wissens auch zu den wenigen Semitisten, die Neuwestaramäisch unterrichtet haben. Deshalb freut es mich sehr, daß ich zu seiner Festschrift einen kleinen Beitrag zur Entwicklung des neuwestaramäischen Wortschatzes im vergangenen Jahrhundert beitragen darf. In der Zeit, als ich an

meinem Wörterbuch des Neuwestaramäischen arbeitete,[1] hat Riccardo Contini mehrmals für mich die Herkunft italienischer Lehnwörter klären können. Auch in der Wortliste in diesem Beitrag findet sich dafür ein Beispiel für seine kollegiale Hilfsbereitschaft, für die ich ihm sehr dankbar bin.

Die hier veröffentlichte Liste enthält Wörter, die zur Zeit meines Aufenthalts in den Aramäerdörfern des syrischen Qalamūn-Gebirges von 1985-1987 bereits ausgestorben oder veraltet waren.[2] Zu genaueren etymologischen Angaben und weiteren Belegstellen zum aufgelisteten Wortschatz verweise ich auf mein Wörterbuch des Neuwestaramäischen. Zum leichteren Auffinden sind die Wörter in alphabetischer Reihenfolge gelistet, wobei *ʿAyn* nach dem Glottisverschluß *ʾ* eingefügt ist. Unter s sind auch die Wörter mit *š* und *ṣ* eingeordnet.

Die Wortliste zeigt, daß im vorigen Jahrhundert nach und nach nicht nur ererbte aramäische Wörter durch Entlehnungen aus dem Arabischen ersetzt wurden, sondern auch Lehnwörter aus anderen orientalischen und auch europäischen Sprachen, insbesondere aus dem Türkischen. Dieser Prozeß wird sich sicher auch in der Zukunft fortsetzen, bis das Neuwestaramäische ausstirbt.

2. Liste der ausgestorbenen und veralteten Wörter

ʾastaxōnča "Krankenhaus" (< türk. *hastahane*). Dieses türkische Lehnwort wurde von den arabischen Entlehnungen *mašfa* und *mustašfa* verdrängt. Die in Baxʿa gebräuchliche Form *ʿasćaxōnca* habe ich dort einmal bei einem alten Sprecher gehört.

ʾayya "Großmutter". Daß in den alten Texten des 19. Jahrhunderts nur die arabische Form *žečča* vorkommt,[3] mag daran liegen, daß die Sprecherin Zēni aus Baxʿa stammte,[4] wo das Wort *ʾayya* nicht oder nicht mehr existierte. In Maʿlūla ist das Wort nur

[1] Arnold 2019.

[2] Informationen zur wirtschaftlichen und gesellschaftlichen Situation des Aramäerdorfes Maʿlūla in dieser Zeit s. Arnold et al. 2004.

[3] Bergstässer 1915, 90.

[4] Arnold 2024, 5-14.

noch alten Menschen bekannt und heute ebenfalls durch *žečča* ersetzt.

ʾ***oḥla*** "Alkali-Pflanzen" (*Seidlitzia rosmarinus*). Diese Pflanzen wachsen in der syrischen Wüstensteppe und wurden in früheren Zeiten von den Bewohnern in Siedlungen nahe der Steppe gesammelt, getrocknet und gemahlen und dann von Händlern in die Aramäerdörfer gebracht und verkauft oder gegen Weizen getauscht. Mit den Alkali-Pflanzen wusch man sich und auch die Kleidung.[5] Mit dem Aufkommen von Seife und Waschpulver wurde die Verwendung von Alkali-Pflanzen aufgegeben, und das Wort wird nur noch von sehr alten Menschen verstanden.

ʾ***otombīl*** "Automobil". Das Wort ist in den Texten von Reich für Baxʿa in der Form *oṭumbīl* zum ersten Mal belegt.[6] In meinen Texten aus Maʿlūla kommt es nur ein einziges Mal bei einem damals 77 Jahre alten Sprecher vor.[7] Das Wort wird wegen seiner französischen Herkunft noch verstanden aber nicht mehr gebraucht und ist durch das arabische *sayyōrča* ersetzt.

ʿ***ammeṣ*** "die Augen schließen". Dieses aramäische Verb kommt nur in den Texten des 19. Jahrhunderts vor und wird heute nicht mehr verstanden. Stattdessen wird das arabische Lehnwort *ṭammaṣ* gebraucht.

ʿ***arbažay*** "Kutscher". Das türkische Lehnwort kommt nur in den alten Texten vor und war schon am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts nur wenigen sehr alten Menschen bekannt. Es dürfte heute ausgestorben sein, weil es schon lange keine Kutschen mehr in Syrien gibt.

ʿ***arr(i)*** "frieren". Das seltene Wort ist mit *ʿamʿarrīl* "es friert mich" in den alten Texten nur einmal belegt.[8] Auch in meinen Texten gibt es nur den einzigen Beleg *ʿamʿarrēḥ* "es friert uns" von einer damals 75jährigen Frau. Das aramäische Wort ist heute durch die arabischen Verben des II und IV Stamms *ṣaḳḳaʿ* oder *aṣḳaʿ* ersetzt.

[5] Arnold 1989, 39f.; Starnitzky 2012, 17.
[6] Reich 1937, 116.
[7] Arnold 1991b, 284.
[8] Parisot 1898, 200.

ʿarṛṭa "zugelaufenes Herdentier". Das Wort kannten in den 80er Jahren des vorigen Jahrhunderts nur noch wenige alte Sprecher in Maʿlūla, weil auch nur noch wenige Bauern Schafe hielten. Heute ist das Wort sicher ganz unbekannt.

baḳḍalōyṭa, auch ***buḳtalōyṭa*** "Schultertuch". Das Wort türkischer Herkunft bezeichnet ein Kleidungsstück, das heute nicht mehr getragen wird. Das Wort wird deshalb nicht mehr verwendet und ist nur noch alten Menschen bekannt.

balḳūṭa "hölzerner Schlüssel" (für die alten Holztüren). Das Wort ist in Maʿlūla in den älteren Texten nur bei Reich belegt.[9] In Maʿlūla gab es Ende des vorigen Jahrhunderts nur noch eine Holztür, die mit so einem Schlüssel geöffnet wurde. In neuerer Zeit ist nur bei dem japanischen Ethnologen Nakano die Form *balḳūṭča* für Ǧubbʿadīn belegt.[10] Es fehlt allerdings das sonst bei ihm übliche Photo, so daß es auch in Ǧubbʿadīn wohl solche Türen nicht mehr gab. Das Wort dürfte deshalb heute ausgestorben sein.

bašbuzuk "gewöhnlicher Mann". Das Wort türkischer Herkunft ist in den älteren Texten nur einmal belegt[11] und war Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts nur noch sehr alten Menschen bekannt. Heute dürfte es ausgestorben sein.

bastōra "Hirtenumhang". Das Wort habe ich mir von einem alten Hirten in Maʿlūla notiert, der früher so einen Umhang hatte. Mit dem Tod dieses Hirten dürfte das Wort ausgestorben sein. Die Klärung der Herkunft des Wortes aus dem italienischen *pastrano* verdanke ich Riccardo Contini.

battūḳa "Bastard". Die Form existierte Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts noch bei einigen alten Sprechern. Die Jüngeren verwendeten alle die Form *bantūḳa*, die sich wohl heute als alleinige Form durchgesetzt hat.

bayʾrḳa "Fahne". Das in den älteren Texten nur einmal bezeugte türkische Lehnwort[12] verstanden Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts nur noch die Ältesten. Das Wort ist heute sicher

[9] Reich 1937, 57.
[10] Nakano 1994, 59.
[11] Bergsträsser 1933, 51.
[12] Reich 1937, 150.

ganz verschwunden und durch das arabische Lehnwort *ʿalma* ersetzt.

bazirgōna "Kaufmann". Das Wort persischen Ursprungs findet sich nur in den Texten des 19. Jahrhunderts. Ein alter Mann hat mir aber die Existenz dieses Wort bestätigt. Heute ist es sicher ausgestorben.

bēšlay "Beschlik" (5-Piaster Silbermünze im Osmanischen Reich). Das in den älteren Texten vorkommende Wort kannten Ende des vorigen Jahrhunderts nur noch die Ältesten. Ich denke nicht, das heute noch jemand die Münzen des Osmanischen Reiches kennt.

bōrča "Para" (kleine Münze im Osmanischen Reich). Das Wort hat in dem Ausdruck *ʿal ōxer bōrča* "bis zum letzten Para" bis in die Gegenwart bei älteren Sprechern überlebt.[13] Daß es sich dabei um eine osmanische Münze handelt, ist den Sprechern nicht mehr bekannt.

ḏartarīṯa "Ulme". Das Wort kommt in Bergsträssers Glossar vor[14] und stammt aus Aufzeichnungen von Prym und Socin. In Maʿlūla existiert nur *tartarīṯa*, das wegen des anlautenden *t* aus dem Arabischen entlehnt sein muß. Wenn die Informantin Zēni war, ist es möglich, daß die Form aus Baxʿa stammt.[15] Das Wort ist heute aber auch in Baxʿa unbekannt, weil es keine Ulmen mehr in der Region gibt.

ḏeḵḵṯa "Arznei". Für das aramäische Wort gibt es nur einen Beleg aus dem 19. Jahrhundert.[16] Ich habe in Maʿlūla niemanden gefunden, der das Wort noch kannte, das heute von dem arabischen Lehnwort *twō* verdrängt worden ist.

ḏōb "wenn, ob". Spitaler hat in seiner Grammatik festgestellt,[17] daß die Form *ḏōb* nur in den Texten des 19. Jahrhunderts vorkommt und in den späteren Texten durch *lōb* ersetzt ist. Das mag daran liegen, daß die Informanten von Bergsträsser Jugendliche waren, darunter vor allem der damals 16jährige

[13] Arnold 1991a, 120.
[14] Bergsträsser 1921, 23.
[15] Arnold 2024, 5-14.
[16] Parisot 1898, 198.
[17] Spitaler 1938, 134f.

ʿAptalla Mʿallmōna, der auch noch Reichs Informant war. Obwohl die Form *ḏōb* zur Zeit meines Aufenthalts in Maʿlūla schon sehr selten war, wurde sie von älteren Menschen durchaus noch verwendet. Daß die Verdrängung durch *lōb* stattfindet, ist aber nicht zu bestreiten.

fūṭa "Krapp" (zum Rotfärben von Eiern zu Ostern). Dieses Wort in Bergsträssers Glossar[18] wird heute nicht mehr verstanden.

gāma "Schwert". Das Wort wurde mir von älteren Männern genannt, als ich sie fragte, ob sie das Wort *ʾāma* kennen.[19] Als ich auf Rückfrage nach der Bedeutung "Schwert" angab, wurde mir die Form *gāma* angegeben, die wohl über einen Beduinendialekt aus dem Türkischen entlehnt wurde. Die Existenz der städtischen Form *ʾāma* wurde bestritten.

ġlōlča "Seidenkleid" (der Braut). Das Wort kommt in den älteren Texten nur bei Reich vor[20] und war zur Zeit meines Aufenthalts in Maʿlūla nur noch älteren Sprechern bekannt.

halyōna "Spargel". Das griechische Lehnwort kommt nur noch in der Redewedung *ḥuwwar ex halyōna* "weiß wie Spargel" vor. Daß *ḥalyōna* "Spargel" ist, wissen die Leute in Maʿlūla nicht mehr, da er in der lokalen Küche nicht verwendet wird.

hanukk(i) "wo". Diese Form wird heute nicht mehr verwendet. Erhalten haben sich nur die kürzeren Formen *hanik*, *ʾanik(k)* und seltener *anúk*.

ḥōslax "fern sei von dir!" Die Redewendung wird gebraucht, um auszudrücken, daß ein Anwesender nach der Verwendung eines Schimpfworts oder eines unanständigen Wortes nicht gemeint ist. Das Wort ist nur in einem Text belegt,[21] wurde aber bei meinem Aufenthalt in Maʿlūla von alten Menschen noch verstanden, obwohl es nicht mehr verwendet wird. Allerdings wurde mir die Form nicht mit ursprünglichem *s* sondern mit *ṣ* als *ḥōṣlax* angegeben. Die heute gebrauchte Redewendung in derselben Bedeutung ist *baʿʿeḏ meʿlax*.

[18] Bergsträsser 1921, 28.
[19] Bergsträsser 1933, 19.
[20] Reich 1937, 82.
[21] Bergsträsser 1915, 93.

kinbyanōyṯa "Schuldschein". Das merkwürdig gebildete, aber sicher ursprünglich aus dem italienischen *cambiale* herzuleitende Wort ist nur in Baxʿa belegt.[22] Über den Sprecher, Aḥmad Masʿūd Fiḏḏa ist nichts weiter bekannt. Aus dem Text kann man jedoch entnehmen, daß er wie viele Männer aus Baxʿa als Schmuggler über die libanesische Grenze tätig war. Möglicherweise war das Wort nur in Schmugglerkreisen in Gebrauch, da es heute weder in Baxʿa noch in Maʿlūla jemand kennt.

ḵluṯya "Geiz". Dieses Wort ist ebenso wie das zugehörige Adjektiv *iḵluṯ* nur noch alten Menschen geläufig und durch das arabische Lehnwort *iṗxel* "geizig" ersetzt. In den älteren Texten ist keines der beiden Adjektive belegt.

laḥta "Grab". Das Wort kommt in den älteren Texten einmal vor.[23] Als Entlehnung aus Arabisch *laḥd* wird es verstanden, aber nicht mehr verwendet. Als Wort für "Grab" ist *qabra* dagegen in den alten und neueren Texten mehrmals belegt.

lapša "Sachen, Gegenstände". Das nur in einem Text des 19. Jahrhunderts belegte aramäische Wort[24] war Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts nur noch alten Sprechern bekannt und ist heute durch das arabische Lehnwort *ġarḏō* ersetzt.

lazzōba "Wacholder". Dieser Baum kommt in je einem Text zum Hausbau aus Baxʿa[25] und Ǧubbʿadīn vor.[26] Da es diesen Baum im Gebiet der Aramäerdörfer heute nicht mehr gibt, wußte mein Sprecher nicht mehr, was für ein Baum das war, nahm aber an, daß es sich um einen Laubbaum handelt. Nakanos Informant wußte, daß der Baum einer Zeder ähnelt. Da keine Wacholderbäume mehr in der Region wachsen und keine Häuser mit Holzdächern mehr gebaut werden, wird auch das Wort nicht mehr lange im Neuwestaramäischen existieren.

lḥōša "Bezaubern, Besprechen". Das nur in den älteren Texten einmal bezeugte Wort[27] wird heute nicht mehr verstanden.

[22] Correll 1969, 44.
[23] Bergsträsser 1915, 134.
[24] *Ibid.*, 34.
[25] Arnold 1989, 16.
[26] Nakano 1994, 5.
[27] Bergsträsser 1919, 158.

maskōbay "Russe, russisch". Statt des heute veralteten Worts in den Texten des 19. Jahrhunderts wird heute *rūsay* verwendet.

mšattxōna "Bräutigam". Das aus den älteren Texten bekannte Wort kommt ebenso wie *mšattxanīṯa* "Braut" in meinen Texten nur in einem Lied von Žaržūra Ruzḳalla vor.[28] Die beiden Wörter werden noch verstanden, werden aber kaum mehr gebraucht und sind fast ganz von *ḥḏūṯa* "Bräutigam" und *ḥḏučča* "Braut" verdrängt worden.

ṣalṭīḳa "liturgischer Gesang". Das griechische Lehnwort kommt nur in den älteren Texten vor.[29] Heute wir stattdessen das arabische Lehnwort *čirtīla* verwendet.

sannīna "Fliegenwedel aus Zweigen". Das im 19. Jahrhundert belegte Wort findet sich in den Aufzeichnungen von Prym und Socin.[30] Das Wort ist heute nicht mehr bekannt.

šawīša "Wachmann, Polizist". Das türkische Lehnwort ist noch bekannt, wird aber nicht mehr verwendet. Stattdessen hat sich das arabische Lehnwort *šurṭay* durchgesetzt.

ṣinṭrōl "Telephonzentrale". Dieses französische Lehnwort aus Maʿlūla und die entsprechende Form *ṣunṭrōn* aus Baxʿa wurden nach dem Ende der französischen Mandatszeit zunächst von dem arabischen Lehnwort *maḳᵊsma* verdrängt, bevor durch das Verschwinden der Telephonzentralen in den Aramäerdörfern beide Wörter außer Gebrauch kamen.

šulṭōna "König". Das Wort ist nur noch in Ǧubbʿadīn in Gebrauch. In Maʿlūla kommt es noch in dem Flurnamen *rōḡmiš šulṭōna* vor. Für "König" wird nur noch *malka* verwendet.

ṭumugān 'Tommygun'. Diese englische Maschinenpistole aus dem ersten Weltkrieg kommt in einem im Herbst 1955 von Anton Spitaler aufgenommenen Text aus Baxʿa vor.[31] Die Waffe ist heute nicht mehr bekannt.

ṭunfesča "Teppich". Dieses persische Lehnwort wurde wahrscheinlich nur für relativ teure Teppich aus Persien gebraucht und kommt deshalb in den älteren Texten nicht vor,

[28] Arnold 2002, 47.
[29] Bergsträsser 1919, 130.
[30] Bergsträsser 1921, 82.
[31] Correll 1969, 106.

weil sich die Dorfbewohner damals einen solchen Teppich nicht leisten konnten. Trotzdem nannten mir einige alte Sprecher dieses Wort, weil sie solche Teppiche in Damaskus sahen und vielleicht auch kauften. Das war wohl erst möglich, als Verkehrsmittel zwischen Maʿlūla und Damaskus existierten. Heute wird für "Teppich" das arabische Lehnwort *suǯǯōtča* verwendet.

xawōža "Herr". Dieses als Titel und Anrede gebrauchte persische Lehnwort wird noch verstanden aber nicht mehr verwendet.

xesfa "Silber". Das aramäische Wort für Silber kommt nur in den alten Texten vor.[32] Allerdings wußten einige ältere Sprecher noch, daß der silberne Hochzeitsgürtel der Braut *zunnōrᵊl xesfa* genannt wurde, aber nicht mehr, daß *xesfa* "Silber" bedeutet. Heute wird nur noch das arabische Wort *fiḍḍa* verwendet.

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Aramäisch im Sprachenkanon des Konzils von Vienne und die Bedeutung des Glottonyms Chaldäisch im lateinischen Mittelalter

HOLGER GZELLA

This article explores language learning practices in medieval Europe, focusing on the study of Semitic languages within the Latin-Christian context. In addition to the well-documented interest in Latin, Greek, and Arabic, the paper examines the conditions and limitations surrounding the study of Hebrew and Aramaic, the latter often subsumed under the label "Chaldaic". Special attention is given to the decree of the Council of Vienne (1311–1312), which established the creation of university chairs for four languages (Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and Chaldaic) for missionary purposes. A philological and historical analysis of the term "Chaldaic" reveals its ambiguous usage, shifting between Jewish Aramaic and Christian Syriac. Despite these institutional ambitions, the actual implementation of such language instruction remained inconsistent. Nevertheless, early efforts laid the groundwork for the development of European Semitic studies, particularly through the key contributions of converts and Eastern intermediaries. The article thus offers a critical reflection on the interplay between missionary objectives, philology, and knowledge transmission in the Latin Middle Ages.

Keywords: Chaldaic glottonym – Council of Vienne – Medieval linguistic education – Semitic language acquisition – Intercultural knowledge transmission

Das europäische Mittelalter war nicht nur eine Blüte tiefgründigen Nachdenkens über das Phänomen der Sprache, sondern auch eine Zeit des intensiven praktischen Spracherwerbs.[1] Dieser beschränkte

[1] Quellen in Hülle und Fülle zur mittelalterlichen Sprachphilosophie sind erfaßt in Borst 1957–1963.

sich keinesfalls bloß auf das Studium des Lateinischen als eines gemeinsamen Wissensspeichers und Verständigungsmittels des Klerus und der gebildeten Stände, sondern schloß auch europäische Nachbarsprachen mit ein. Namentlich das Französische genoß ein hohes Prestige sowohl als Medium ritterlicher Kultur als auch als Zugang zum Handel mit der Champagne. Das Provenzalische diente als Gemeinsprache der Lyrik, die Vorbilder der mittelhochdeutschen Epik liegen in der französischen Dichtung und beispielsweise der dänische Adelsnachwuchs unternahm Bildungsreisen nach Paris.[2] Zudem kam es in Süditalien mit seiner griechischsprachigen Minderheit bereits vor der großen Migration byzantinischer Gelehrter und ihrer Texte nach dem Fall Konstantinopels in die Geistesmetropolen der Renaissance zu einer lebendigen Kulturvermittlung. Einige Handschriften bezeugen anscheinend sogar tradierte Reste von Griechischkenntnissen. Im dreizehnten Jahrhundert nahmen die Griechischstudien nach langer Vernachlässigung nördlich der Alpen dann merklich zu, besonders in England.[3]

Ganz uneinheitlich dagegen ist bislang der Forschungsstand zu Güte und Verbreitung der Kenntnisse semitischer Sprachen im lateinischen Mittelalter. Im Westen bekannt waren Arabisch, Hebräisch und Aramäisch. Für das Arabischstudium in Europa fließen die Quellen am reichlichsten: besonders intensiv betrieben wurde es in den Teilen Spaniens, die unter muslimischer Herrschaft standen, wobei arabische Marginalien in lateinischen Kodizes, zweisprachige Bibeltexte und lateinisch-arabische Lexika (wie Codex Or. 231 der Leidener Universitätsbibliothek) spätestens für das zwölfte Jahrhundert eine in hohem Maße formalisierte didaktische Kultur bezeugen. Sie bildet den Höhepunkt einer längeren Entwicklung, denn bereits aus der Zeit um 900 ist ein Fragment einer mozarabischen lateinisch-arabischen Handschrift des Galaterbriefes erhalten (heute in der Kapitelsbibliothek von Sigüenza, Nr. 150), aus dem Hochmittelalter liegen zudem eine arabisch annotierte Ars maior

[2] Bischoff 1961 hat zahlreiche Belege zusammengestellt.
[3] Dazu hat Berschin 1980, 113-210 umfangreiches Material gesichtet.

Donats und Institutiones Priscians vor, das Fundament eines jeden mittelalterlichen Grammatikunterrichts.[4]

Solche verschiedentlichen Bemühungen, Erscheinungen der arabischen Grammatik mit lateinischen Kategorien zu verbinden, weisen deutlich auf ein fortgeschrittenes Stadium kontrastiver Sprachbetrachtung hin, das die ehrgeizigen arabisch-lateinischen Übersetzungsprojekte der Zeit aus allen Wissensgebieten wie Philosophie, Medizin und, mit der Koranparaphrase Robert Kettons, auch Religion wohl erst ermöglichte. Mehrsprachige Bibelhandschriften aus dem normannischen Königreich Sizilien (etwa die griechisch-lateinisch-arabische Psalterhandschrift Harley 5786 der British Library oder die der Apostelgeschichte und Briefe in der Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Signatur Gr. Z. 11) belegen ähnliche Bestrebungen im normannischen Königreich Sizilien, wenngleich in kleinerem Umfang.[5]

Neue Impulse erhielt der Arabischunterricht im dreizehnten und vierzehnten Jahrhundert, als sich die Mission der Franziskaner und Dominikaner von den Grenzen zu nichtchristlichen Gebieten weit in diese hinein ausbreitete, nach Nordafrika, nach Vorderasien und ins Mongolenreich. Für die Bedürfnisse der Außenmission entstanden in kurzer Zeit etliche, allerdings meist kurzlebige Sprachkollegien der Bettelorden.[6] Über ihre innere Organisation und die Unterrichtspraxis samt Lehrinhalten ist jedoch wenig bekannt, abgesehen davon, daß sie im Regelfall maurische Konvertiten als Sprachlehrer beschäftigten und recht ernüchternde Berichte über die geringen Arabischkenntnisse der Missionare einen eher mäßigen Erfolg implizieren.

Für das Hebräischstudium läßt sich in christlichen Kreisen im selben Zeitraum noch kein vergleichbarer Grad der

[4] Als Überblick für die Entwicklungen von den Anfängen bis 1500 ist Fück 1955, 3-29 immer noch sehr lehrreich; zu den arabisch annotierten Grammatiken siehe Martin 2021.

[5] Näheres zu diesen Triglotten findet sich bei Houghton 2023, 165-166.

[6] Die Quellen dafür sind eingehend aufgeführt und ausgewertet in Altaner 1931; 1933c; 1936a; 1936b. Altaners in kurzer Folge veröffentlichte Aufsätze bilden seit nunmehr fast einem Jahrhundert die Grundlage jeder Diskussion des Gegenstandes.

Institutionalisierung nachweisen. Obwohl das Hebräische in der Westkirche seit dem vierten Jahrhundert neben dem Griechischen und dem Lateinischen fest zur Trias der heiligen Sprachen gehörte,[7] scheint es lange keine regelrechte Tradition des Erwerbs gegeben zu haben. Vielmehr mußten sich noch Generationen späterer Ausleger bis weit ins Hochmittelalter hinein für einzelne Etymologien und fallweise lexikographische Details zu alttestamentlichen Namen und Lexemen meist auf Hieronymus berufen, der sehr wohl über einschlägige Kenntnisse verfügte.[8] Zuweilen gibt es darüber hinaus anekdotische Evidenz für die sporadische Konsultierung jüdischer Gewährsleute unter Berufung auf einen *Hebraeus quidam*. In Handschriften finden sich daneben zwar auch ein paar hebräische Gesprächsphrasen für Heiliglandfahrer wie *tenli chos echad iain* "Gib mir einen Becher Wein!",[9] aber einen selbständigen Zugang zu originalsprachlichen Quellen verliehen diese sicher nicht, weil sie keinen Schlüssel zu einem grammatischen Verständnis darboten.[10]

Gleichwohl scheint sich zwischen dem zwölften und dem dreizehnten Jahrhundert hier und dort ein wachsendes Interesse am hebräischen Urtext des Alten Testamentes abzuzeichnen, das über die Kenntnis isolierter Vokabeln hinausgeht. Es schlägt sich in rund zwei Dutzend hebräisch-lateinischen Bibelhandschriften mehrheitlich aus England nieder.[11] Sie haben wohl wißbegierigen Tüftlern als induktive Lehrmittel gedient und wurden von jüdischen Gelehrten angefertigt, da eine eigene grammatische Traditionsbildung mit entsprechenden pädagogischen Hilfen für das Hebräischstudium unter christlichen Bibelauslegern noch

[7] Zur Entwicklung dieses Konzeptes siehe Gzella 2025a, 95-101.

[8] Thiel 1973, 219-448 hat das Material bei den lateinischen Vätern bis Isidor von Sevilla in einem ungemein wertvollen Glossar samt Quellenangaben vereinigt.

[9] Der Nachweis findet sich in Bischoff 1961, 218.

[10] Dies betrifft auch eine Handvoll hebräischer Texte in lateinischer Transkription, einschließlich von jüdischen Informanten rückübersetzter christlicher Gebete, die Thiel 1973, 204-208 behandelt und mit Recht als "erratische Blöcke innerhalb einer des Hebräischen absolut unmächtigen Landschaft" bezeichnet hat (208).

[11] Eine Übersicht bietet Olszowy-Schlanger 2011.

nicht nachgewiesen werden kann. Bezeichnenderweise orientieren sich sowohl eine schon länger bekannte, nur fragmentarisch erhaltene hebräische Grammatik (Ff.6.13 in Cambridge, fol. 66r–v) als auch eine erst kürzlich edierte (Longleat House MS 21), beide aus dem dreizehnten Jahrhundert, noch völlig an der masoretischen Überlieferung.[12]

Die Frage nach der Erlernung aramäischer Sprachen durch Christen im lateinischen Mittelalter schließlich, die Aramäisch meist "Syrisch", teils auch "Chaldäisch" nannten, führt dann vollends in *terra incognita*. Dies gilt gleichermaßen für die jüdischen, in der Tradition fest mit dem Hebräischen verbundenen und für die christlichen Varietäten. Wie im Falle des Hebräischen konnte man Bemerkungen zur Etymologie und Bedeutung einer kleinen Handvoll Lexeme aus den aramäischen Teilen des Alten Testamentes den Werken namentlich des Kirchenvaters Hieronymus entnehmen, der zudem ein paar wenige Einblicke in die aramäische Umgangssprache palästinischer Christen des vierten Jahrhunderts erlaubt.[13] Doch

[12] Das erste wurde herausgegeben von Nolan und Hirsch 1902, 199-208, mit hypothetischer Zuschreibung an Roger Bacon (erhalten sind vor allem Passagen aus der Lautlehre), das zweite von Olszowy-Schlanger 2023.

[13] Das Glossar bei Thiel 1973 enthält folglich auch ein paar aramäische Lexeme wie die Schrift an der Wand *Mane Thecel Phares* bei Belsazars Gastmahl aus dem aramäischen Teil des Danielbuches (5,25; siehe Thiel 1973, 350). Diese werden jedoch zunächst kaum durchweg als nicht-hebräisches Sprachgut wahrgenommen worden sein, da sie demselben kanonischen Textcorpus entstammen. Noch in den neuzeitlichen wissenschaftlichen Hebräischwörterbüchern erfolgte eine Trennung zwischen hebräischem und aramäischem Wortschatz erst gegen Ende des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts. Die Belege für palästinisch-aramäisches Lokalkolorit in den Heiligenviten des Hieronymus behandelt Gzella 2025b, 749-750. Hieronymus unterschied aber sehr wohl korrekt zwischen Hebräisch und Aramäisch, wie seine Bemerkungen zu *abba* "Vater" (*Syrum est non Hebraeum*; Nachweise bei Thiel 1973, 221, s.v.), *Cephas* als Beinamen des Petrus (*Syrum est*, *ibid.* 277, s.v.), *Igar sedutha* als der aramäischen Variante des Toponyms Galed (*lingua Syra … appellatur*, *ibid.* 311, s.v. *Galaad*) oder *Golgotha* (*Syrum est non Hebraeum*, *ibid.* 318, s.v.) zeigen. Bei dem liturgischen Ruf *Maranatha* ist er sich wegen der Nähe beider Sprachen nicht ganz sicher (*magis Syrum est quam Hebraicum, tametsi ex confinio utrarumque linguarum aliquid et Hebraeum sonet*, *ibid.* 351, s.v.), ähnlich bei *Talitha cumi* "Mädchen, steh auf!" (*ibid.* 431, s.v.). Daß *bar* "Sohn" aramäischen und nicht hebräischen Ursprungs ist, wußte sogar noch Isidor von Sevilla (*ibid.* 258, s.v.).

ein Studium der biblischen aramäischen Originaltexte etwa durch Vermittlung jüdischer Tradenten an Hand zweisprachiger Handschriften ist im Gegensatz zum immerhin aufkeimenden Interesse am Hebräischen auch im dreizehnten Jahrhundert bislang überhaupt nicht nachweisbar. Da eine Aufbereitung des Wortschatzes und der grammatischen Formen, wie sie für das Arabische und im Ansatz für das Hebräische schon vorlagen, noch fehlten, waren außerhalb der jüdischen Gemeinschaften die Voraussetzungen für eine Arbeit an diesen Quellen gar nicht erst gegeben.

Bei der rabbinischen Traditionsliteratur sieht es nicht anders aus. Um 1240 bis 1245 übersetzte zwar der Konvertit Nicholas Donin im Kontext antijüdischer Polemik rund zweitausend Exzerpte des hebräisch-aramäischen Babylonischen Talmuds ins Lateinische, aber es gibt keine Anzeichen dafür, daß diese trotz einer gewissen Verbreitung – immerhin haben sich zehn Handschriften davon erhalten – irgendeine noch so geringe direkte Auseinandersetzung mit jüdisch-aramäischen Quellen im Original befördert hätten.[14] Daran dürften selbst "hebräische" Handschriften (was nach üblicher Terminologie aramäisches Material nicht ausschließt, weil "hebräisch" auch im allgemeinen Sinne "jüdisch" oder "in jüdischer Sprache" meinen kann), die in den Jahrzehnten nach dem Talmudverbot von 1248 in die Bücherbestände der Päpste und einzelner Ordenshäuser eingegangen sind, nichts geändert haben.

Ganz analog verhält es sich mit den Sprachen syrischer Christen, die sich im Laufe des ersten Jahrtausends aus dem Nahen Osten über Zentralasien bis China verbreitet hatten und seit dem dreizehnten Jahrhundert über die Außenmission und zaghafte Unionsverhandlungen in Kontakt mit der lateinischen Kirche kamen. Zwar reiste der Franziskaner Wilhelm von Rubruk 1253 nach Asien und der ostsyrische Mönch Rabban Sauma ging

[14] Die Übersetzung der Exzerpte liegt jetzt vor in der Ausgabe von Cecini und de la Cruz Palma 2018, die hebräischen und aramäischen Termini darin behandelt Dal Bo 2018.

1287 auf Grand Tour bis gar zum Papst.[15] Aber die Dolmetscher, die für solche Unternehmungen nötig waren, dürften nicht in Europa ausgebildet worden sein. Denn auch an der römischen Kurie trieb man noch zur fraglichen Zeit allenfalls auf kleiner Flamme Griechischstudien, und von einem Aramäischunterricht in den Sprachkollegien der Franziskaner und Dominikaner ist nirgends die Rede.[16] Laut zeitgenössischen Quellen diente zur Verständigung mit den syrischen Kirchen ohnehin das Arabische.[17]

Vor diesem Hintergrund kann es nur überraschen, daß im frühen vierzehnten Jahrhundert eine im lateinischen Christentum fast gänzlich unbekannte Sprache wie Aramäisch plötzlich und mit erheblichem Aufwand in Forschung und Lehre fest etabliert werden sollte. Unter Papst Klemens V. beschloß nämlich das Konzil von Vienne (1311–1312) in Kanon 11, an der päpstlichen Kurie sowie den Universitäten von Bologna, Oxford, Paris und Salamanca je zwei Dozenturen für Griechisch, Hebräisch, Arabisch und "Chaldäisch", also Aramäisch, einzurichten, und zwar mit dem Ziel, "die Irrenden auf den Weg der Wahrheit zu führen" (*ut errantes in viam veritatis inducere*) – das wären insgesamt zehn neue Stellen allein für Aramäisch. Johannes XXII. ließ dieses Dekret, den sogenannten "Sprachenkanon" von Vienne, sodann im Jahre 1317 in den Clementinen veröffentlichen. Der relevante Passus lautet in Original und Übersetzung:[18]

> Ut igitur peritia linguarum huiusmodi possit habiliter per instructionis efficaciam obtineri: hoc sacro approbante concilio

[15] Beide Reiseberichte, der eine in lateinischer, der andere in syrischer Sprache, liegen inzwischen in modernen zweisprachigen kommentierten Ausgaben vor, Chiesa 2011 und Borbone 2021.

[16] Wie sich aus der profunden Untersuchung von Altaner 1936a ergibt. Zur Beschäftigung mit dem Griechischen an der Kurie im dreizehnten und vierzehnten Jahrhundert siehe Weiss 1977.

[17] Altaner 1936b, 440; 445.

[18] Friedberg 1881, Spalte 1179. Im überlieferten Wortlaut ist "Griechisch" in der Reihe wohl durch einen Schreibfehler ausgefallen, kann aber nach frühen Textzeugen sicher ergänzt werden, wie Weiss 1952, 1 Anm. 2 gezeigt hat. Die Übersetzung ist die des Verfassers, eine deutsche Wiedergabe des gesamten Dekrets druckt Berschin 1980, 305 ab.

> scholas in subscriptarum linguarum generibus, ubicunque Romanam curiam residere contigerit, nec non in Parisiensi et Oxoniensi, Bononiensi et Salamantino studiis providimus erigendas, statuentes, ut in quolibet locorum ipsorum teneantur viri catholici, sufficientem habentes hebraicae, <graecae,> arabicae et chaldaeae linguarum notitiam, duo videlicet uniuscuiusque linguae periti, qui scholas regant inibi, et libros de linguis ipsis in latinum fideliter transferentes, alios linguas ipsas sollicite doceant, earumque peritiam studiosa in illos instructione transfundant, ut instructi et edocti sufficienter in linguis huiusmodi fructum speratum possint Deo auctore producere, fidem propagaturi salubriter in ipsos populos infideles.
>
> Damit also eine derartige Vertrautheit mit den Sprachen wirksam im Unterricht erlangt werden kann, haben wir unter Billigung dieses heiligen Konzils vorgesehen, daß Schulen in den untengenannten Arten von Sprachen errichtet werden sollen dort, wo auch immer die römische Kurie residieren mag, ebenso in Paris und Oxford, Bologna und Salamanca. Wir beschließen, daß an jedem derselben Orte katholische Männer bestallt werden, die eine ausreichende Kenntnis der hebräischen, <griechischen,> arabischen und aramäischen Sprache haben, und zwar jeweils zwei, die mit jeder dieser Sprachen vertraut sind. Sie sollen die Schulen leiten und Bücher aus den Sprachen selbst getreu ins Lateinische übersetzen. Andere sollen dieselben Sprachen gewissenhaft lehren und jenen die Vertrautheit und eifrige Unterweisung vermitteln, damit sie ausreichend unterwiesen und ausgebildet in derartigen Sprachen die erhoffte Frucht unter Gottes Urheberschaft hervorbringen können zur zukünftigen heilsamen Verbreitung des Glaubens unter denselben ungläubigen Völkern.

Für eine angemessene Besoldung der Sprachdozenten an der Kurie, so heißt es weiter, solle der Heilige Stuhl sorgen, für die in Paris der französische König, für die in Oxford die kirchlichen Institutionen der britischen Inseln, für die in Bologna die entsprechenden Einrichtungen Italiens und für die in Salamanca diejenigen Spaniens, je nach Vermögen. Die Gründe, aus denen die Väter des Vienner Konzils sich dazu bewegen ließen, Aramäisch in die offiziell geförderten Sprachstudien aufzunehmen, können nur dann mit annähernder Genauigkeit ermittelt werden, wenn zugleich klar ist, welches Aramäisch man

dabei im Sinn hatte. Die religiöse Traditionsliteratur, die auch europäische Juden überlieferten und studierten, umfaßt mit einem kleinen Teil der Hebräischen Bibel, mit den Targumen, also den interpretierenden und aktualisierenden Übersetzungen der Bibel, und Passagen erheblichen Umfangs aus dem Palästinischen wie dem Babylonischen Talmud gleich mehrere unterschiedliche aramäische Schriftsprachen. Zudem dienten davon und untereinander durchaus verschiedene aramäische Dialekte Juden und Christen des Nahen Ostens als Umgangssprachen. Und Angehörige der syrischen Kirchen verfügten mit dem Klassisch-Syrischen über eine gemeinsame Kultur- und Literatursprache, die sich mit der ostsyrischen Kirche bis nach China verbreitet hatte. Auf welche dieser zahlreichen aramäischen Varietäten bezieht sich also die Bezeichnung "Chaldäisch" im Konzilsdekret?

Nach den einschlägigen Untersuchungen Berthold Altaners, der seine Forschungen zur Missionsgeschichte des dreizehnten und vierzehnten Jahrhunderts nach seiner Entlassung aus dem Staatsdienst durch die Nationalsozialisten unbeirrt fortsetzte, ist es seit nunmehr neunzig Jahren einstimmig akzeptiert, daß "Chaldäisch" hier das Syrische meine, weil es um die Mission unter den Christen der syrischen Tradition gehe.[19] Altaner stützt diese Auffassung durch einige relevante Belege, außerdem paßt sie bestens in den inhaltlichen Zusammenhang der Stelle sowie in den historischen Kontext der von Raimundus Lullus propagierten Außenmission. Daß man die Kenntnis des Syrischen fördern wollte, um sich mit Vertretern der syrischen Kirchen in ihrer Gelehrtensprache statt, wie es noch in der ersten Hälfte des dreizehnten Jahrhunderts die Regel gewesen zu sein scheint, auf Arabisch zu unterhalten, ist zunächst ebenfalls plausibel, zumal die Christen in Asien wohl eher Persisch als Arabisch gesprochen haben dürften.[20]

[19] Altaner 1933a; 1933b; übernommen unter anderem von Weiss 1952, 1; Berschin 1980, 304; Bobzin 2008, 96.

[20] Daher ist es mißverständlich, wenn Altaner 1933a, 217-218 meint, es könne sich nur um "das damals gesprochene Syrisch" handeln, da sich das gesprochene Aramäisch zu dieser Zeit wohl schon längst stark diversifiziert hatte.

Herkömmlicherweise bezieht sich die in der lateinischen Kirche seit dem vierten Jahrhundert bis weit in die Neuzeit gebräuchliche Fremdbezeichnung "Chaldäisch" allerdings auf die aramäischen Schriftsprachen der jüdischen Traditionsliteratur wie Bibel, Targum und Talmud, also auf Aramäisch in Quadratschrift. Hieronymus, auf den die mittelalterlichen Autoritäten ja für Faktenwissen zu den semitischen Sprachen regelmäßig zurückgriffen, scheint diesen Begriff in seinem Danielkommentar etabliert zu haben. Der Grund dafür ist, daß im Buch Daniel (2,4b) der Wechsel vom Hebräischen zum Aramäischen in der Rede der "Chaldäer", also der Hofastrologen, stattfindet. Indes diente für das gesprochene wie das geschriebene Aramäisch der Christen, gleich welchen Dialektes, das auch im Griechischen und Lateinischen schon in vorchristlicher Zeit gebräuchliche Glottonym "Syrisch". Es hatte im griechisch-römischen Kulturkreis die ursprüngliche Selbstbezeichnung "Aramäisch" (nach dem alten Landschaftsnamen "Aram" für das Gebiet etwa der Syrischen Wüste) abgelöst.[21] So verwendeten beispielsweise Hieronymus und die Pilgerin Egeria im vierten Jahrhundert "Syrisch" für das gesprochene Aramäisch der Christen Palästinas und noch im siebten Isidor von Sevilla für Aramäisch generell.[22]

Der ältere allgemeine Gebrauch von "Syrisch" auch für aramäische Wörter und Passagen aus dem jüdischen Schrifttum, wie in der Übersetzung der biblischen Sprachbezeichnung *ʾārāmīṯ* "Aramäisch" (2 Könige 18,26; Jesaja 36,11; Esra 4,7; Daniel 2,4) in der griechischen Septuaginta und der lateinischen Vulgata, setzt sich zwar noch bei Hieronymus mitunter fort.[23] Aber der Umkehrfall, daß "Chaldäisch" die klassisch-syrische Schriftsprache

[21] Die älteren aramäischen Sprachbezeichnungen werden erläutert bei Gzella 2023, 22-29. "Chaldäer" meint im griechisch-lateinischen Altertum meist "Magier, Wahrsager" oder, seltener, im ursprünglich geographischen Sinne Einwohner Babyloniens, war also im normalen Sprachgebrauch schon besetzt und nicht als Glottonym verfügbar.

[22] Gzella 2025b, 750-751; Isidor von Sevilla, *Etymologien* VII,9,4.

[23] Nachweise liefern seine Angaben zur Herkunft einiger aramäischer Wörter, siehe Anmerkung 13 und vgl. Dummer 1968, 398-399.

oder einen der Regionaldialekte aramäischsprachiger Christen im Mittleren Osten meint, ist zunächst ungewöhnlich. Gefestigt hat sich diese Verwendung erst in der kirchenadministrativen Terminologie im Zuge der Annäherung zwischen der römisch-katholischen und einem Teil der ostsyrischen Kirche und ist ab der Frühen Neuzeit bis heute die reguläre Bezeichnung für die seit dem sechzehnten Jahrhundert mit Rom unierten Angehörigen des ostsyrischen Ritus. Die Akten des Konzils von Ferrara-Florenz (1438–1445) haben die Nomenklatur konsolidiert, um 1700 ist sie in den Bücherlisten der Propaganda Fide schon ganz gängig und gehört damit zum weltkirchlichen Standard. Mithin verwendete sie auch Goethe für die Landessprache eines der Seminaristen aus den Missionsgebieten, die er während seiner Italienreise im Januar 1787 in der römischen Propaganda Gedichte aus der Heimat vortragen hörte.[24]

Nun ist es jedoch fraglich, ob eine mutmaßliche Gleichsetzung von "Chaldäisch" und "Syrisch-Aramäisch" im Sprachenkanon von Vienne bereits den später gesicherten Gebrauch für eine spezifische Ortskirche in der Fachterminologie der römischen Mission und Verwaltung antizipiert. "Chaldäisch" mag nämlich gar nicht ausschließlich als Glottonym für Aramäisch gemeint sein, sondern knüpft möglicherweise an den im antiken Latein ebenfalls gut, wenngleich gegenüber "Magier" weniger häufig bezeugten Sinn von "Chaldäisch" als Volks- oder Landesbezeichnung für Babylonien und dessen Einwohner an.[25] Dann assoziierte das Wort die Christen Mesopotamiens primär mit ihrer Region, nicht mit ihrer aramäischen Sprache. Ohnehin lassen sich manche mittelalterlichen Belege des Wortes gar nicht auf einen präzisen Sinn festlegen: mal erscheint es im Zusammenhang mit Angehörigen der syrischen Kirchen,[26] mal bezeichnet es die

[24] Littmann 1922, 175-176.

[25] Beispielsweise Cicero, *De divinatione* I,2; Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* I,9,6; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* XXIII,6,25. Weiteres bei Pease 1977, 43-44.

[26] Einige Belegstellen führt Altaner 1933a, 218 Anm. 1 an; sie verdienen aber eine nähere Überprüfung.

arabische Sprache der Sarazenen.[27] Mitunter war es wohl ähnlich generell gemeint wie "orientalisch".

Ein solches breites Bedeutungsspektrum schließt nicht prinzipiell aus, daß "Chaldäisch" sich um 1300 auch auf die syrisch-aramäische Kirchensprache beziehen konnte und nicht zwangsläufig auf den spezifischen Sinn "Aramäisch in Bibel und jüdischer Traditionsliteratur" beschränkt war, den Hieronymus ihm gab und der in der frühneuzeitlichen Erforschung des Aramäischen weiterlebt. Wenn aber das Konzil von Vienne das Studium des Syrischen ausdrücklich zum Zwecke der Mission unter den Christen der syrischen Tradition vorgeschrieben haben sollte, bleibt die Schwierigkeit, daß diese im Text des Dekrets dann den "ungläubigen Völkern" (*populi infideles*) subsumiert würden. Für Christen, auch solche außerhalb einer Kirchengemeinschaft mit Rom, wäre das eine sehr ungewöhnliche Bezeichnung, zumal in einem offiziellen kirchlichen Dokument. Sollte man für diese dann nicht eher eine Umschreibung wie *in Nestorianam heresim depravati* oder *in fide heretici* (so im *Tractatus de locis et statu sanctae terrae* aus der zweiten Hälfte des zwölften Jahrhunderts für die west- und ostsyrischen Christen) oder ähnlich erwarten?[28] Schließlich empfing der ostsyrische Kleriker Rabban Sauma während seiner Europareise 1287 nach überzeugender Darlegung seiner Rechtgläubigkeit vom Papst höchstpersönlich die heilige Kommunion, was kaum hätte geschehen können, wenn Angehörige seiner Glaubensgemeinschaft als "Ungläubige" klassifiziert worden wären.[29]

[27] Siehe Golubovich 1923, 450: *lingua caldaica saracenorum*; vgl. Du Cange 1883, Spalte 283b. Um 1500 konnte "Chaldäisch" sogar kurzzeitig das Klassisch-Äthiopische meinen (Bobzin 1994, 86-92), das man im lateinischen Mittelalter noch gar nicht als eigene Sprache kannte. Dies mag mit einigen noch nicht geklärten aramäischen Zitaten in äthiopischer Schrift bei Flavius Mithridates alias Guglielmo Raimondo de Moncada zusammenhängen (vgl. Bobzin 2008, 97 mit Anm. 5; siehe auch Walde 1916, 153 zu Mithridates als Sprachlehrer).

[28] Kedar 1998, 123–131 enthält eine kritische Edition des Textes, die zitierten Ausdrücke stehen auf Seite 125, Zeilen 4 und 5.

[29] Die Szene wird im Reisebericht detailliert und lebendig geschildert: Borbone 2021, 122-125.

Altaners entschiedene Deutung des Glottonyms "Chaldäisch" auf die Mission unter den syrischen Kirchen geht einher mit einer vehementen Ablehnung eines jeden Bezugs zu den Bibelstudien als "irrig und unhaltbar".[30] Seine Sicht mag dabei jedoch unter dem Einfluß der Rezeption des Sprachenkanons von Vienne in der kurz zuvor, nämlich am 8. September 1928, veröffentlichten Enzyklika *De studiis rerum orientalium provehendis* von Pius XI. stehen, denn diese will explizit eine Kenntnis der orientalischen Kirchen in der Priesterausbildung fördern. Die Aufzählung "Hebräisch, Griechisch, Arabisch und Chaldäisch" im Konzilsdekret muß aber gar nicht unbedingt eigens mit Blick auf die Mission zusammengestellt worden sein, sondern könnte sich auch einer um 1300 bereits gängigen Viererliste verdanken.

Eine solche hatte Roger Bacon in der Tat vierzig Jahre zuvor in seinem *Kompendium der Philosophie* von 1272 (§86) entworfen und der altehrwürdigen Trias der "heiligen" Sprachen Latein, Griechisch und Hebräisch zur Seite gestellt.[31] Ihm galten nämlich Griechisch, Hebräisch, Arabisch und "Chaldäisch" als die vier "Wissenssprachen" (*linguae sapientiales*), aus denen das gesamte Wissen der Lateiner übersetzt worden sei und die deshalb das empirische Fundament jeder Wissenschaft bildeten.[32] Bacon meinte damit ausdrücklich Literatursprachen und gebrauchte "Chaldäisch" im traditionellen Sinne für das Aramäische der jüdischen Schrifttradition. Möglicherweise haben die Konzilsväter von Vienne eben diese Liste und das ihr zugrundeliegende Bildungsprogramm aufgriffen. Sie könnten das in der Absicht getan haben, die Mission nicht nur durch praktische Sprachkenntnisse zu fördern, sondern diese in den Entwurf einer neuen gesamtwissenschaftlichen Propädeutik einzubetten. Die erstrebte Übersetzung von Büchern aus den jeweiligen Sprachen ins Lateinische paßte bestens dazu.

Ohne geeignetes Personal läßt sich aber auch die weitestblickende Hochschulstrategie nicht umsetzen. Unmittelbare

[30] So besonders klar formuliert in Altaner 1933a, 217.

[31] Zum Topos der drei heiligen Sprachen im lateinischen Mittelalter siehe jetzt Gzella 2025a, 95-101.

[32] Siehe für den Text Maloney 2018, 82-85.

Folgen des Vienner Dekrets sind daher in den Dozentenlisten der betroffenen Universitäten für die zweite Hälfte des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts bislang nicht nachgewiesen. Allenfalls vom Kapitel der Kathedrale von Chartres ist belegt, daß es, wie vom Konzil gefordert, Mittel für einen Aramäischlektor in Paris bereitgestellt hat (*pro eo qui legit Parisius Chaldeum*), aber ob Dozenturen dort und gegebenenfalls anderswo auch tatsächlich besetzt werden konnten, bleibt einstweilen offen. Darüber hinaus finden sich Hinweise auf einen geplanten Hebräischunterricht durch jüdische Konvertiten in Paris und Oxford um 1320, eine fortlaufende Tradition der Hebräischlehre samt Griechisch und Syrisch ist in Paris erst ab 1421 nachweisbar, in Salamanca wurde 1411 der erste Professor für biblische Sprachen ernannt (Martín Martínez de Cantalapiedra) und in Oxford berief man sich noch 1517 bei der Einrichtung einer Griechischdozentur auf Vienne.[33] Auch Petrus Nigri (1434–1481/1484) hat das Studium des biblischen Urtextes mit Verweis auf den Vienner Sprachenkanon legitimiert.[34]

Gleichwohl wuchs der Wissensdrang, denn ab dem späten vierzehnten Jahrhundert sprechen christliche Gelehrte wie Stephan Bodeker (1385–1459) ausdrücklich davon, daß sie selber aramäische Handschriften mit jüdischen Traditionstexten zumindest eingesehen und mittelalterliche jüdische Hebräischwörterbücher konsultiert hätten.[35] Und in die Hebräischstudien Petrus Nigris flossen auch eigene Kenntnisse jüdisch-aramäischer Traditionstexte wie des Danielbuches und der Targume ein.[36] Die entscheidenden Vermittler in diesem Bereich waren jüdische Konvertiten, für das Syrische sodann im sechzehnten Jahrhundert Geistliche der syrischen Kirchen wie Moses von Mardin,[37] die ihr Wissen und ihre Handschriften europäischen Gelehrten zur Verfügung stellten. Ohne das

[33] Die entsprechenden Belege verzeichnen Altaner 1933b; Weiss 1952.

[34] So im Prolog zu seiner Psalmenerklärung, abgedruckt bei Walde 1916, 90-91.

[35] Dokumentiert von Walde 1916, 32 Anm. 3: *libri targum, quos ego vidi, habent hebraicum et chaldaicum permixtum*; vgl. 36 zu seiner Benutzung von Menaḥems *Maḥbereth*.

[36] Im Original erschlossen von Walde 1916, 96-136 und 142-143.

[37] Näheres zu ihm bei Borbone 2022.

Ferment dieser indigenen philologischen Praktiken gäbe es die europäische Semitistik nicht.

Die Literaturverweise in den Anmerkungen zu den obigen Überlegungen dokumentieren den erheblichen Beitrag, den die italienische Wissenschaftstradition zur Erhellung der semitischen Sprachkenntnisse im europäischen Mittelalter geleistet hat und bis in die Gegenwart noch immer leistet. Es ist eine Freude und eine Ehre, Riccardo Contini als einem ihrer bedeutendsten Vertreter einen kleinen *saggio* auf den Gabentisch zu legen. Ich bezweifle zwar, daß so ein großer Enzyklopädist wie der Jubilar darin irgendetwas findet, das noch nicht im Horizont seiner stupenden Bildung erschienen ist, hoffe aber dennoch, daß er etwas Freude an der Kombination der Gegenstände findet. Die Vertrautheit mit dem Mittelalter stand väterlicherseits an seiner Wiege, die deutsche Sprache ist die seiner Mutter und die Semitische Philologie hat er sich als seinen Weg in die Gelehrsamkeit erwählt. So sei dies ein bescheidenes Zeichen des Dankes für die vielen stets neuen Dinge, die ich aus Veröffentlichungen, Vorträgen und dem zwanglosen Gespräch mit ihm lernen durfte und die man sonst nirgendwo findet!

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Syriac Studies

Et si l'on prenait au sérieux les propositions de Bar Zoʿbî ?

GEORGES BOHAS

This paper explores the advantages of using Syriac-made models to describe Syriac grammar. In particular, the paper uses the rules proposed by the grammarian Bar Zoʿbi (fl. 1246) and presents several examples that illustrate his line of reasoning. The paper focuses on the internal vocalic changes that occur within different stems in both biconsonantal and triconsonantal verbs in Syriac and how these changes are easier to explain if scholars employ Syriac models instead of Arabic ones.

Keywords: Syriac grammar – Bar Zoʿbi – biconsonantal verbs – triconsolantal verbs – Syriac vowels

Bar Zoʿbî divise les verbes actifs en trois sortes :[1] 1- bilitère, 2- trilitère et 3- quadrilitère :

A-1. *Le bilitère se divise en* (A-1-1) *ceux qui sont voyellés d'un* a *à l'initiale et* (A-1-2) *ceux qui sont voyellés d'un* â *à l'initiale.*

A-1-1. *Ceux qui sont voyellés d'un* a *à l'initiale sont comme* : baz, gar de grârâ, daq, har, *de* herṯa, zal, ḥam, ṭab *de* ṭebbâ, kap, laz, mar, nad, *de* nedṯâ, sap, ʿal, pad, ṣar, qaš, rag, šar, tak.

A-1-2. *Ceux qui sont voyellés d'un â à l'initiale sont comme* bâṯ, gâr, *de* gayârûṯâ, dâq, *de* dawqa, zâʿ, ḥâr, ṭâš, kâm, lâṭ, mâš, nâḏ, *de* nâwdâ, sâm, ʿâp, pâš, ṣâm, ṣâr, *de* ṣûrtâ, qâm, râḇ, šâḏ, šâṭ, šâʿ, šâr, tâḵ, *de* nekpṯâ.

[1] Voir Bohas 2024.

C'est à cette deuxième catégorie que nous allons nous intéresser ici. Il s'agit des verbes que, selon la tradition inspirée par les grammairiens arabes, on appelle creux et dans la tradition orientaliste *ʿÉ-waw. Les verbes ʿÉ-waw sont des trilitère dont la deuxième radicale, waw ou yûdh, consonne faible, s'est ordinairement altérée ou a disparu »*.[2] Cette tradition pose en effet qu'il s'agit de triconsonantiques, la seconde consonne étant un *waw*, ce qui implique de poser qu'un verbe comme *qâm* relève d'une représentation abstraite /qwam/ parallèle à /ktab/. Notons que Costaz a l'honnêteté de dire en note : *« une opinion mois autorisée assigne aux verbes ʿÉ-waw une origine bilittère »*. En fait, cette « opinion moins autorisée » est celle des deux grandes autorités en fait de grammaire syriaque médiévale : Bar Zoʿbî et Bar Hebræus (!). Malheureusement, ce *waw* postulé par le grammairien a la mauvaise idée de ne pas apparaître dans la conjugaison verbale, bien au contraire, au peʿal, c'est un â qui apparaît : *qâm* ; aux formes ʾapʿel et ʾettapʿal, c'est un î (*ʾaqîm* et *ʾettqîm*) qui apparaît, tandis qu'à la forme paʿʿel, c'est un double y qui apparaît, comme dans : *kayyen* et enfin, un double w dans une vingtaine de verbes[3] comme *ṭawweš* « souiller ». Le paradoxe consiste donc en ce que dans ces prétendus *ʿÉ-waw,* le *waw* n'apparaît pratiquement jamais dans la conjugaison verbale, si ce n'est dans cette vingtaine de verbes de schème paʿʿel.

Essayons donc, à l'instar de Bar Zoʿbî, de partir d'une racine bilittère √qm pour le verbe *qâm*. Et d'une racine trilittère √qṭl pour le verbe *qṭal*. Comme dans les grammaires des orientalistes, j'adopte cette racine car elle n'amènera pas d'interférences avec les phénomènes de spirantisation.[4] Mais la proposition de Bar Zoʿbi me semble impliquer que ces biconsonantiques aient non seulement une racine biconsonantique, mais aussi un schème morphologique

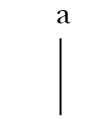
[2] Costaz 1955, 410.

[3] Costaz 1955, n° 417. En fait, selon Aïm (2017, 314) : « Pour conclure, on peut éventuellement pour une trentaine de racines imputer le caractère fort du w à la qualité dénominative du verbe ou du nom. Pour une autre trentaine de racines, on doit admettre l'idiosyncrasie, le caractère lexical (c'est-à-dire non conditionné) du w fort ».

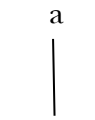
[4] Voir à leur sujet Bohas, 2017.

biconsonantique. On aurait donc à la forme peʿal, le un schème triconsonantique CCvC et un schème biconsonantique CvvC:

Triconsonantique :



Biconsonantique:



Pour qṭal :



, ce qui donne *qṭal*.

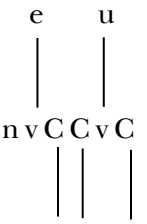
Pour *qâm*, la voyelle se diffuse sur les deux positions médianes :



, ce qui donne *qâm*.

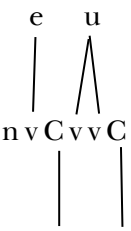
A l'inaccompli, le lexique doit fournir la voyelle apophonique, pour ces deux verbes, un u, ce qui donne √qm (u) et √qṭl (u). Le schème sera le même avec préfixe :

avec la racine triconsonantique :



, ce qui donne *neqṭul*.

Avec la racine biconsonantique, le u se diffuse sur les deux positions :



, ce qui donne *neqûm*, le e étant en syllabe ouverte tombe : *nqûm*.

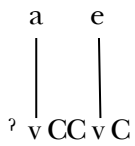
Cette règle est très générale. Je lui ai donné cette forme dans Bohas 2024 :

SYNC V –> Ø / _CV.[5]

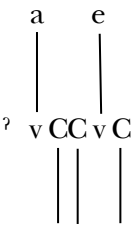
Qui peut être glosée : en syllabe ouverte une voyelle brève est effacée. Elle s'applique itérativement de droite à gauche (avec une exception que nous verrons plus loin).

Passons aux formes dérivées. Commençons par l'ʾapˁel, l'alternance accompli inaccompli est a/e :

[5] V brève ou longue.

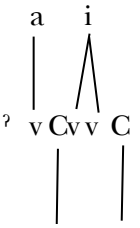


Pour la racine √qṭl, pas de problème :

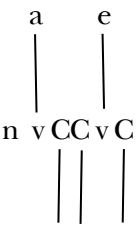


, ce qui donne *ʔaqṭel*.

Pour la racine √qm, l'alternance accompli inaccompli est i/i :

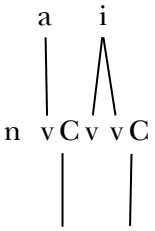


, ce qui donne /ʔaqîm/. La règle de syncope ne s'applique pas quand la voyelle est précédée par un ʔ. Il en va de même à l'inaccompli :



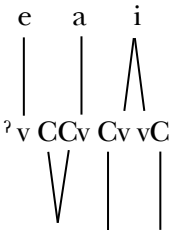
, ce qui donne *naqṭel*.

Pour la racine √qm, comme précédemment :



, ce qui donne /naqîm/. Le a se trouvant en syllabe ouverte tombe régulièrement et on obtient *nqîm*.

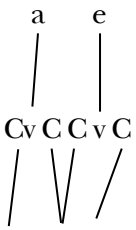
Pour l'etpʿel, Costaz n° 416 dit que l'ettapʿal remplace l'etpeʿel, ce qui donne, pour le biconsonantique, le schème :



, ce qui donne ʾettaqîm, le a étant en syllabe ouverte tombe, ce qui donne *ʾettqîm*.

On observe que dans tous ces cas, le radical a un schème à 4 places : CCvC et CvvC.

Que se passet-il avec un schème ou le radical a la forme paʿʿel : CvCCvC ? Pour une racine triconsonantique, pas de problème, la médiane se diffuse sur les deux positions :

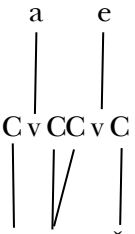


, ce qui donne bien *qattel*. Mais pour une racine biconsonantique comme √kn, que va-t-il se passer ? Un glide remplit cette position et c'est le plus souvent un y :



, ce qui donne *kayyen* « constituer ».

Selon Costaz, dans une vingtaine de verbes le glide de remplissage est un *w* :[6]



, ce qui donne *ṭawweš* « souiller ». C'est le seul endroit où le supposé *ʿÉ-waw* se manifeste.

Discussion

A- Que se passerait-il si, au lieu de se situer dans la perspective de Bar Zoʿbî on se situait dans celle des grammairiens arabes et des orientalistes selon laquelle ces verbes auraient effectivement une représentation triconsonantique sous-jacente incluant un *waw*, reconstituée par analogie avec les verbes « sains » comme qṭal ?

1) Pour *qâm* on devrait poser /qwam/ analogue à /qṭal/ et donc une règle /wa/>â.

2) Pour *nqûm*, on devrait poser /neqwum/ analogue à neqtul et donc une règle /wu/>û.

3 Pour *ʾaqîm* on devrail poser /ʾaqwem/ analogue à ʾaqtel et donc une règle /we/>î.

[6] Voir note 3.

4) Enfin pour l'ettqîm, on devrait poser /ettaqwam/ analogue à ʾettapʿal et donc une règle /wa/>î qui contredirait explicitement celle de 1), puisque la séquence /wa/ deviendrait dans un cas *â* et dans l'autre *î*.

C'est sans doute pour cela que le modèle des grammairiens arabes ne peut pas être appliqué tel quel à la phonologie du syriaque. La question est alors : pourquoi les grammaires orientalistes se sont-elles obstinées à l'adopter ? La réponse[7] est sans doute que les orientalistes ont adopté des représentations avec *w* parce qu'ils se plaçaient dans la perspective de la grammaire comparée où l'arabe était vu (à l'époque) comme l'état le plus proche du proto-sémitique, d'où la volonté de tout expliquer à partir de l'arabe, du moins tel que décrit par les grammairiens arabes.

B- Que faire du n°421 de Costaz ? Il cite des verbes comme *rwaz* / *nerwaz* qui se comportent « comme des verbes forts ». Justement, ce sont des triconsonantiques √rwz, exactement comme *qtal* et non des biconsonantiques comme *qâm* √qm.

Conclusion

J'ai argumenté dans Bohas 2024 pour une refondation des études syriaques. Il devrait être évident au terme de cette petite étude, qu'on a largement avantage à adopter un cadre plus concret que celui pratiqué couramment et à travailler sur des radicaux comme *qâm,* comme le faisait Bar Zoʿbî, plutôt que sur des représentations abstraites comme /qwam/.

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7 Comme me l'indique Emmanuel Aïm (communication personnelle).

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Svarioni in mostra, ovvero due note di epigrafia siro-turca: 1. Toshkent, O'zbekiston tarixi davlat museyi, Inv. N. 312/12 2. München, Museum Fünf Kontinente, Inv.-Nr. 23-15-128

PIER GIORGIO BORBONE

This paper offers a discussion of two inscriptions from Central Asia, which have been recently shown in an exhibition at the Musée du Louvre in Paris and at the Museum of the Five Continents in Munich, respectively. Both inscriptions have been equipped with vague descriptions and faulty information about their date, provenance and even the language of composition.

Keywords: Epitaphs – Tombstones – Syriac – Uyghur – Epigraphy

1. Toshkent, O'zbekiston tarixi davlat museyi, Inv. N. 312/12 [#0214][1]

Recentemente è stata esposta al Louvre nella mostra *Spléndeurs des oasis d'Ouzbékistan*[2] una «Pietra decorata con una croce cristiana e un'iscrizione», detta provenire da Urgut (Uzbekistan), databile tra l'ottavo e il tredicesimo secolo – così la didascalia (Fig. 1 a).[3]

[1] In assenza di un sistema di riferimento unico per citare le pietre tombali nestoriane, si adotta a fini pratici la numerazione attribuita nel catalogo digitale da me preparato a fini di studio, aggiornato al 2025. I riferimenti alle edizioni si trovano in appendice.

[2] Titolo completo: "Spléndeurs des oasis d'Ouzbékistan. Sur les routes caravanières d'Asie centrale", 24 novembre 2022 – 6 marzo 2023.

[3] «Pierre décorée d'une croix chrétienne et d'inscriptions / Stone with Christian cross and inscriptions | Ouzbékistan, Urgut, 8e-13e siècle / Uzbekistan,

Oltre a essere lacunose (si omette che l'oggetto che la croce "decora" è una pietra tombale e che la breve iscrizione è siriaca) le informazioni sono imprecise. Urgut, località pedemontana circa 40 km a sud-est di Samarcanda, è nota come sede di un insediamento monastico nestoriano del X secolo, citato da Ibn Hawqal (m. 988), esplorato e scavato anche di recente.[4] Ma non è il sito originario della pietra. Infine, la datazione non è generica ma espressamente dichiarata nell'epitaffio come l'«anno 1573», sottinteso dell'era seleucide, ovvero 1261/2 dell'era volgare.

La pietra tombale esposta è una delle circa seicento provenienti dal cimitero nestoriano scoperto alla fine del XIX secolo presso la città allora denominata Pishpek, dal 1991 Bishkek, capitale del Kyrgyzstan.[5] Dalle datazioni degli epitaffi, in scrittura siriaca, prevalentemente in siriaco ma talora in turco o misti, risulta che il cimitero fu usato dal 1249 al 1356,[6] per più di un secolo, da cristiani di lingua turca, la cui presenza fu probabilmente dovuta alla conquista mongola.

Le pietre furono inviate in gran parte a San Pietroburgo e in numero assai minore a Mosca. Altre rimaste a Pishpek ebbero vari destini: furono distribuite a musei dell'Impero Russo / Unione Sovietica (Ashgabat, Kazan', Novosibirsk, Omsk, Tashkent,

Urgut, 8th-13th centuries | Pierre, décor gravé / Stone, engraved decoration | Tachkent, Musée national d'Histoire d'Ouzbékistan, 312/12.» Pressoché identica la descrizione nel catalogo, ove però si indica solo il tredicesimo secolo: «67- Pierre avec une croix chrétienne - Ouzbékistan, Urgut - 13e siècle - Pierre, décor gravé – H. 29; l. 22 cm – Tachkent, Musée national d'histoire d'Ouzbékistan, n° 312/12» (Rante – Lintz 2022, 92).

4 Savchenko 2022. Nell'estate 2023 è stato scavato un cimitero che si ritiene monastico: ospita solo sepolture maschili e prive di pietre tombali. Ne è stata data notizia al convegno "Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia", Samarcanda, 21-25 settembre 2023, i cui atti sono in corso di stampa.

5 Kol'chenko 2017.

6 Le datazioni sono espresse, secondo l'uso della Chiesa d'Oriente, impiegando l'era seleucide, o "dei Greci / della Grecia" (= AG), talvolta affiancata dall'anno secondo il computo dei dodici animali, espressamente definito "alla turca" (sir. *turka'it*, turco *türkçe*) negli epitaffi: i cristiani locali usavano un calendario "civile", quello turco, e uno ecclesiastico, quello seleucide (Bazin 1991). Il picco numerico di sepolture si ha negli anni 1337-1339 (1649-1650 AG), in coincidenza con l'epidemia di peste che più tardi giunse in Europa (Slavin 2022).

Tomsk) o donate a esploratori stranieri, così che se ne trovano a Durham, Helsinki, Londra, Monaco, Parigi.[7] Una cinquantina fu trasferita ad Almaty nei primi anni 1920; diciannove vi si trovano tuttora,[8] le restanti sono apparentemente perdute.

Daniil Hvol'son (Daniel Chwolson), semitista di San Pietroburgo, che già nel 1886 aveva pubblicato alcune iscrizioni, nel 1890 e nel 1897 rese noti più di quattrocento epitaffi, sulla base delle pietre originali e di un migliaio di riproduzioni (fotografie, calchi a inchiostro, disegni).[9] L'epitaffio della pietra esposta al Louvre fu pubblicato a partire da un calco a inchiostro.[10] La pietra, rimasta a Pishpek, fu trasferita con alcune altre a Tashkent in tempi non noti.

L'esemplare rientra nella tipologia della maggior parte delle pietre tombali siro-turche datate: una croce al centro; sopra di essa la prima linea dell'epitaffio, riportante la data; il seguito in verticale ai lati della croce, e talora anche al di sotto di essa. La frase segue la formula consueta: indicazione dell'anno; "questa è la tomba di X"; attributi e qualifiche (la più frequente: "credente"; spesso definizioni di età, come "ragazzo/ragazza", "giovane", "anziano" …) ed eventuali apposizioni e specificazioni ("prete", "esegeta", "figlio del tale", "moglie del tale" ...). La datazione al 1573 AG (1261/2 AD), condivisa da una sola altra epigrafe, rende la pietra una fra le più antiche. L'unica coeva (#0006) fu pubblicata da Chwolson nel 1897 a partire da una fotografia (Fig. 2).[11]

Alcune specificità della pietra tombale esposta a Parigi meritano attenzione, dato che né Chwolson né le successive

[7] Al Museo del Louvre si trovano in deposito quattro pietre tombali di Pishpek (Desreumaux 2015).

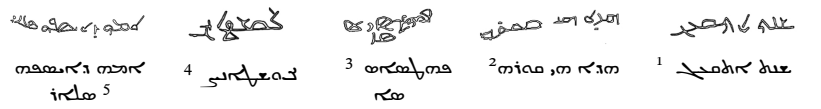
[8] Almaty, Museo Statale Centrale della Repubblica del Kazakhstan, nn. invv. KP 21930/1-19. Nel giugno 2022, data della mia ultima visita, tre di esse erano esposte. Diciassette furono in mostra a Venezia nel 2000 (Curatola 2000).

[9] Chwolson 1890 e 1897.

[10] Chwolson 1897, 7. L'epitaffio è stato ripubblicato sulla base di una fotografia (Dickens 2009); sono poi comparse una fotografia con dettagliata descrizione materiale senza discussione né traduzione dell'epitaffio (Minasjanc 2009-2012, 626. 628) e una fotografia con sommario riassunto dell'epitaffio (Baumer 2016, 210).

[11] Chwolson 1897, 7.

ripubblicazioni tengono in conto o commentano aspetti artistici e paleografici.[12] Peculiare è il disegno della croce: nonostante la grande varietà di forme attestata nel corpus,[13] le "perle" decorative a forma di trifoglio non hanno paralleli e il piedestallo rettangolare ricorre in un solo altro caso, di datazione più recente (#0256, 1612 AG), dove peraltro la croce è del tutto diversa (Fig. 3). Sembra che l'incisore abbia voluto caratterizzare la propria opera elaborando liberamente la tipologia della croce "perlata" già attestata tra le pietre di datazione più antica e poi dominante. Al di là delle forme abnormi di certe lettere, l'epitaffio ripete una formula e la sequenza delle parole e dei loro singoli componenti è scontata.



[1] *šnt'* tq'g [2] *hd' hy qwrh* [3] *phṣ's* [4] *xwšṭ'nṣ* [5] *'mh d'ysph sl'r*

Anno 1573. Questa è la tomba della signora *phṣ's*, madre del comandante d'armata.

1. L'anno è indicato con lettere dell'alfabeto con valore numerico. Quest'uso ricorre in 153 casi sui 492 epitaffi datati del cimitero di Pishpek.[14] Solo in 28 ricorre come unica datazione,[15] e solo in questo caso preceduto da "anno" allo stato costrutto, ovvero *šnat*, mentre gli altri 27 impiegano la formula "nell'anno" (*ba-šnat*). Dickens osserva che «Whereas grammatically it would be more correct to have the prefix ב … before the word שנה (*šant*, [sic] "year") … it is missing here and in many inscriptions in the

[12] Quanto agli aspetti materiali, Dickens 2009, 27 segnala solo le dimensioni: «28.5 cm high X 20.5 cm wide» (il numero d'inventario attribuito «Cat. 908/8 in the Tashkent museum», non corrisponde all'attuale). Minasjanc 2009-2012, 686 descrive il reperto nei dettagli senza commenti, segnalando dimensioni di poco diverse: «29,5×21,5×8 cm» e discordanti da quelle indicate nel catalogo della mostra del Louvre (v. nota 3).

[13] I tipi di croce, unici o ricorrenti, ammontano a circa centoventi nelle tre pagine di tabelle pubblicate da Sluckij 1889, tab. III.

[14] Negli altri l'anno è scritto con parole: per esempio, in questo caso, "mille cinquecento settanta tre".

[15] Negli altri è citata insieme alla datazione secondo il computo turco.

corpus.»[16] In simili espressioni di datazione l'assenza della preposizione è ben documentata in siriaco: per esempio, in 12 su 35 iscrizioni del Tur ʿAbdin.[17] Non si tratta di un errore ma di una scelta stilistica. Se poi si considerano le «numerose iscrizioni del corpus» che impiegano la formula senza preposizione, si nota che quasi sempre tali epitaffi sono datati con il solo computo turco: su 31, 20 hanno *šnat* (in un caso a *šnat* corrisponde il turco *yil*) e solo 4 impiegano la formula *ba-šnat*. I restanti 7 casi riportano solo l'anno. Questa formula breve adottata principalmente nelle datazioni secondo il computo turco si riscontra in iscrizioni tra le più antiche. Negli epitaffi datati secondo i due computi si generalizza l'impiego di *ba-šnat* per enunciare prima l'anno seleucide (in genere con l'espressione *ba-šnat* X *hwā* "avvenne nell'anno X") poi l'anno "alla turca", quasi sempre preceduto dal solo *šnat*.[18]

Paleografia: la *ālaph* come semicerchio orizzontale sormontato da un tratto verticale non unito è peculiare. La lettera *taw* è unita alla successiva, fenomeno ben attestato nella scrittura anche libraria siro-orientale dell'epoca.

2. L'espressione "questa è" *hāde*ʾ *hī* (pron. *hādāy*), cioè il dimostrativo femminile "questa" seguito dal pronome femminile di terza persona enclitico con funzione di copula, è tipica delle sepolture femminili. Il soggetto grammaticale, cioè la parola "tomba", *qaḇrā*, è di genere maschile, ma il sesso della defunta sopravanza.[19] L'espressione è talora compendiata nella scrittura (*hdy*, 23 casi, o *hdhy*, 10 casi), ma la grafia completa separata è maggioritaria (155 casi). La parola "tomba" seguita dal pronome

[16] Dickens 2009, 28.

[17] Palmer 1987.

[18] Le formule di datazione si possono compendiare in tre tipi principali, ciascuno con varianti sintattiche e lessicali interne: 1. computo turco solo (31 epitaffi, 7 varianti), 2. computo seleucide solo (40 epitaffi, 4 varianti), 3. entrambi i computi (300 epitaffi, 55 varianti).

[19] Vi sono numerose eccezioni, cioè casi in cui la tomba di una donna è indicata con l'equivalente espressione maschile *hāna hū* / *hānaw* "questo è". All'origine delle discrepanze sta probabilmente la pratica di una lingua madre priva di genere grammaticale dei cristiani locali. Ma la questione è più intricata e non ci è dato qui di procedere oltre.

suffisso -*h* (m. o f.), prevista nella formula, è scritta in modo irregolare: *qwrh*. La confusione di *waw* e *beth* fricativa non sorprende, ed è documentata in altri 2 casi,[20] cui se ne aggiungono 2 con la grafia ridondante *qwbrh*: uno nella pietra coeva (#0006, 1573 AG), l'altro in un epitaffio più recente (#0343, 1646 AG). Considerato che la parola *qaḇrā* compare in quasi tutti gli epitaffi, compresi quelli in turco, quindi più di seicento volte, stupisce che gli errori indotti dalla pronuncia[21] siano così pochi. Nelle lingue turciche la parola "tomba" è un prestito per lo più dall'arabo, come risulta dall'elenco delle forme attestate nelle lingue moderne: turco *kabır*, azero *ghäbir*, bashkiro *ghäbir*, kazako e kirghiso *kabır*, tataro *kabir*, uzbeko *kabr*. Ma in uiguro moderno, parlato soprattutto nella regione autonoma uigura (Xinjiang, Repubblica Popolare Cinese), si trova la voce *qävrä*,[22] che si spiega bene come prestito siriaco. Non è questo l'unico nesso tra la lingua degli epitaffi siro-turchi e la lingua uigura moderna. Dunque in entrambi gli epitaffi del 1573 AG la parola "tomba" è scritta male, ma in modi diversi.

Paleografia: ritorna una *ālaph* alquanto originale, costruita con un cerchio sormontato del tratto verticale. La *reš* è sorprendente: non c'è dubbio su quale fosse la lettera che il lapicida voleva/doveva scrivere, ma la forma che risulta è sbagliata o volutamente elaborata o decorativa, come sembrano essere i vari tipi di *ālaph*. Anche la *he* del suffisso risulta difforme, mentre la stessa lettera iniziale è tracciata come di consueto, ma unita alla successiva, e così pure la *waw*; vale quanto sopra detto a proposito di *taw*.

3. Il nome della defunta, sul cui sesso non ci sono dubbi per via della formula iniziale e soprattutto perché detta essere "madre", è malamente leggibile. Considero le lettere *semkath-ālaph* sottoscritte come una correzione/conferma della sequenza superiore, senza presumere certezza ma sulla scorta di interventi

[20] #0216 (1575 AG), #0088 (1631 AG).

[21] Nella grafia di parole turche in epitaffi siriaci e turchi la bilabiale *beth* è fricativa; per esempio, il turco *tavišqan* "lepre" è scritto *ṭbyšqʾn*. L'occlusiva bilabiale *b* è rappresentata nei testi turchi in scrittura siriaca da *peh*.

[22] *Karşılaştırmalı*, I, 418-419.

simili in altri epitaffi.[23] La lettura che presento riprende quasi interamente quella suggerita da Dickens con punto interrogativo («ܒܚܛ̈ܝ̈ܢ؟»); non sono in grado di spiegare il nome come siriaco, né turco o persiano, tipologie tutte presenti nell'onomastica degli epitaffi. Dickens suggerisce per le prime tre lettere un riferimento al persiano *baḫt* "fortuna";[24] cosa plausibile, dato che il termine serve a comporre antroponimi tanto in siriaco quanto in turco.[25] Ma resta oscuro, a Dickens come a me, il senso delle lettere finali. Chwolson intese come nome proprio la parola successiva («das Grab der Kuschtantz…»), e quanto alle lettere precedenti le considerò «uno strano scarabocchio, alla fine del quale sono leggibili solo la lettera ܠ e sotto ܣ», ciò che lo indusse a suggerire che l'incisore volesse scrivere il nome del defunto ma avendolo sbagliato l'avesse cancellato quasi del tutto.[26] Il nome non è preceduto dalla preposizione *d-* prefissa, che è richiesta in siriaco per una locuzione come "questa è la tomba di X", ovvero *hādāy qabrāh d-*X. L'assenza della preposizione è però la regola negli epitaffi, eccetto che in un numero minore di casi.[27]

Paleografia: la *peh* iniziale è sicura, il resto delle lettere pare riconoscibile come *he* e *ṭeth* se si tiene conto del ductus

[23] Parti di parole riscritte vicino al termine da correggere: #0074 (1627 AG), #0434 (1652 AD), #0550 (non datata), #0582 (1618 AG).

[24] Dickens 2009, 31.

[25] Dickens 2009, 31 n. 108 dichiara in nota di non osar suggerire la lettura *Baḫtsiz*, ricorrendo al suffisso turco *-siz* "privo di, senza", a causa del significato che ne deriverebbe: «Although *baxtsiz* – formed by the addition of the Turkic negative adjectival suffix *-siz* and meaning "unlucky" – fits my reading of *PH.SYS*, it is highly unlikely this name would be given to a child in Turkic culture, for obvious reasons.» Mi domando se, al contrario, un nome "omeopatico" come questo non potesse essere comunque adottato, per lo meno in ambiente mongolo. Un ostacolo è però la lettura della lettera come *yodh*: dovrebbe essere collegata da entrambi i lati. Come s'è visto, suggerisco di legge una *ālaph*, in base alla sillaba *s᷾* correttiva sottoscritta.

[26] Chwolson 1897, 7. Si ricordi che Chwolson lesse l'epitaffio solo nel calco a inchiostro (Fig. 1 b).

[27] Un elenco incompleto: #0002 (1561 AG), #0004 (1566 AG), #0010 (1575 AG), #0014 (1581 AG), #0019 (1593 AG), #0022 (1597 AG), #0026 (1598 AG), #0036 (1603 AG), #0217 (1575 AG), #0521 (non datata), #0634 (1605 AG). Le date suggeriscono che maggiore aderenza alla grammatica siriaca si abbia negli epitaffi più antichi.

tondeggiante che il lapicida evidentemente predilige. Le due *semkath* rientrano nell'uso comune, ma si osserva l'irregolarità del tratto superiore della seconda. La *ālaph* finale legata a destra è un semplice tratto verticale lievemente curvo, affine alla forma *serṭo* occidentale.

4. La parola letta da Chwolson come nome proprio, "Kuschtantz", non è siriaca. Si tratta di un termine di sicura origine sogdiana, per quanto non documentato in tale forma.[28] La prima lettera, ﺥ, resa con *x*, fu aggiunta dei sogdiani cristiani ai grafemi siriaci per rappresentare la consonante velare/glottale sorda della propria lingua. La stessa parola contiene un altro grafema siriaco che vale per un fonema sogdiano, la *ṣade* (ﺼ) per la palatale *č*. Il grafema siriaco *ṭeth* nella parola sogdiana perde il valore "enfatico" nell'uso sogdiano e turco. I turchi cristiani ripresero la scrittura siriaca con le modifiche apportate dai cristiani sogdiani.[29] La qualifica *xwšṭ'nč* ricorre per una ventina di defunte; il significato di "insegnante",[30] attribuitole sulla base di tale valore veicolato in sogdiano cristiano alla forma maschile, *xwšty*, non è adeguato. In effetti il significato base è, anche per il maschile, "anziano". Una *xwšt'nč* non sarebbe dunque un'insegnante, ma un'"anziana", ovvero una "signora", per età e per posizione sociale. Nella lingua uigura moderna ricorre, in tutti i dialetti, un termine palesemente derivato, previa metatesi, da questa parola sogdiana: *qušnač*. Lo si riferisce a una "signora", la moglie di un imam, di uno studioso, o di un personaggio eminente.[31] Ecco quindi un secondo nesso, oltre alla parola "tomba", tra uiguro moderno e certi usi linguistici degli epitaffi. Qui *xwšt'nč* è la qualifica di una donna di rango e anche di una certa età, un aspetto molto spesso menzionato riguardo ai defunti, che frequentemente sono detti *ṭalya/ṭlitā* "ragazzo/ragazza", *'laymā/'laymtā* "giovane", più di rado s*ābā/sābtā* "vecchio/vecchia", e spesso appunto *xuštanč* "signora, madama".

[28] Così Pelliot 1914, poi Livšic 1981, ripreso da Sundermann 1995.
[29] Sims-Williams 1989, 178; Skjærvø 1996, 519.
[30] Dickens 2009, 30.
[31] Zieme 2006.

Paleografia: le lettere sono tracciate secondo l'uso, eccetto che le due finali, *nun* e *ṣade* collegate. La *ālaph* finale si conferma di "tipo *serṭo*". La *waw* si trova ancora legata anche a sinistra. Il piccolo cerchio superiore della *ṭeth* rimanda al ductus curvo prediletto dal lapicida. La *šin* è formata a Y, cioè costruita con una divaricazione sopra un tratto più o meno verticale – una forma corrente negli epitaffi, spesso compresente con la forma a V, dove la divaricazione parte direttamente sulla linea di scrittura.

5. L'apposizione "madre dell'*ispah-salār*" rispetta la struttura del rapporto genitivale siriaco, ovvero uso del pronome suffisso anticipato (*-h*) e della preposizione *d-*. Quest'uso "regolare" è decisamente raro: nel caso dell'apposizione "moglie di X", che ricorre 17 volte, un solo caso mostra l'espressione regolare,[32] e delle 75 volte in cui "figlio di X" è espresso con *brh*[33] addirittura nessuno. Il composto *ispah-salār* è un prestito persiano, lingua nella quale compare come *sipāh-sālār*.[34] La forma con vocale prostetica parrebbe turcizzata, ma è segnalata anche in persiano: *ʾspʾh*, forma che però non pare costruisca composti con *sālār*.[35] La parola, presente in altri due epitaffi con ortografia minimamente diversa ma pur sempre con *i* prostetica,[36] equivale nel senso al siriaco *rab-ḥaylā*, attestato anch'esso negli epitaffi.[37]

Paleografia: *ālaph* finale di tipo *serṭo*; le due *ālaph* isolate ancora costruite su semicerchi in modo del tutto peculiare. La *dālath* è più piccola e meno angolare della precedente. La *reš*, piuttosto piccola, è regolare rispetto alla precedente forma abnorme. Le *he*

[32] #0019 (1593 AG), dove eccezionalmente è regolare anche l'attribuzione della tomba: *hānaw qabrāh d-Mayfre mhaymantā*; si noti l'uso del dimostrativo maschile per una defunta.

[33] In una dozzina di casi si usa lo stato costrutto *bar* seguito dal nome. In tre casi allo stato costrutto *bar* segue la preposizione *d-* prefissa al nome (*bar d-*X), locuzione irregolare: #0010 (1575 AG), #0238 (1599 AG), #0246 (1603 AG).

[34] Steingass 1975, 651: «*sipāh-sālār* (like *sipāh-dār*, and *sipāh-kash*): General of an army.»

[35] Steingass 1975, 48: «*ʾspʾh* (*ispāh*) a large army… *ʾspdʾr* (*ispidār*): A general, commader.»

[36] #0285 (1624 AG): *ʾyspʾslʾr*; #0409 (1650 AG): *yspʾslʾr*.

[37] In quattro di essi: #0015 (1589 AG), #0235 (1597 AG), #0526 (non datata), #0577 (1600 AG).

finali tonde e con il tratto a destra assai corto si differenziano di molto dalla forma più rigida e più comune adottata per le due iniziali. Tale variabilità sostiene forse la lettura come *he* della seconda lettera nella riga 2.

Peculiarità grafiche sono forse condizionate dal supporto, un sasso tondo non preparato, ma indubbiamente nel tracciare una croce così decorata e nell'inventare forme inusitate per certe lettere l'artefice volle interpretare liberamente una tradizione decorativa e grafica che la pietra coeva e quelle vicine nel tempo mostrano già affermata, a vantaggio della memoria della «signora madre del comandante», il cui nome disgraziatamente ci rimane al momento alquanto oscuro.

La scelta di mettere in mostra a Parigi proprio questa straordinaria pietra tombale tra quelle conservate a Tashkent, tutte provenienti da Pishpek e da Almaliq, ha permesso ai visitatori di ammirare un testimone di fenomeni artistici, religiosi e linguistici che è opportuno divulgare, per quanto localizzati non nelle oasi dell'Uzbekistan ma alle pendici delle Montagne Celesti.

2. München, Museum Fünf Kontinente (già Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde), Inv.-Nr. 23-15-128. [#0700]

Questa pietra è stata esposta nella mostra *Dschingis Khan und seine Erben. Das Weltreich der Mongolen / Cengiz Han ve Mirasçıları. Büyük Moghol İmparatorluğu*,[38] cui corrisponde un catalogo ricco di informazione e apparato iconografico, in edizione tedesca e turca.

Si tratta del pezzo N. 381,[39] definito «Pietra con croce nestoriana e resti di un'iscrizione sogdiana» – tedesco, «Pietra recante una croce nestoriana e tracce di scrittura sogdiana» -

[38] Presentata in Germania (Bonn, Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 16 giugno – 25 settembre 2005; Munchen, Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, 26 ottobre 2005 – 29 gennaio 2006), Austria (Schloss Schallaburg, 31 marzo – 1° novembre 2006) e Turchia (İstanbul, Sabancı Üniversitesi - Sakıp Sabancı Müzesi, 7 dicembre 2006 – 8 aprile 2007).

[39] Dschingis Khan 2006, 327; Cengiz Han 2006, 504. La scheda è firmata B.J.R. (Bruno J. Richtsfeld).

turco,[40] proveniente da Guldja, Xinjiang (Repubblica Popolare Cinese) e databile al nono secolo. Il nome di Gottfried Merzbacher menzionato tra parentesi nella scheda di catalogo indica a chi si deve la presenza a Monaco del reperto.[41] La descrizione prende spunto dalla croce "di Malta" per informare sulla "Chiesa nestoriana" diffusasi da Baghdad lungo le "Vie della Seta" fino in Cina (Fig. 4). Come si vedrà l'origine nella città di Guldja si può confermare. La datazione invece non è motivata, e neppure si spiega o si chiarisce il concetto di «resti di un'iscrizione sogdiana.»

L'iscrizione è ben leggibile nelle ottime fotografie di entrambe le edizioni del catalogo. Per quanto assai breve è intera e non è sogdiana ma siriaca, per scrittura e lingua: ܩܝܡܬ ܥܠܝܡܬ *qymtʾ ʿlymtʾ* "La giovane Qyamtā".[42] Simili concisi epitaffi, limitati al nome e all'indicazione generica dell'età dei defunti e lasciando sottinteso "questa è la tomba di", sono frequenti nei cimiteri di Pishpek, Burana e Almaliq. Con ciò si chiarisce quel che la didascalia non dice, ovvero quale fosse l'uso della «pietra con croce».

Quanto alla data, il «nono secolo» è da escludere: la pietra rientra, per tecnica d'incisione in riserva e per stile del brevissimo epitaffio, in un corpus di una quarantina di pietre riferite ad Almaliq, capitale dell'appannaggio di Chaghatai nel XIII-XIV secolo, sede di cristiani nestoriani e di missionari latini francescani. Il sito dell'antica Almaliq si trova poco a est della moderna Guldja, in uiguro moderno *ġūljā*, o Yining (伊宁) in cinese, capoluogo della Prefettura autonoma kazaka del fiume Ili, Regione autonoma uigura del Xinjiang, Repubblica Popolare Cinese, da dove la pietra dichiaratamente proviene. Lapidi

[40] «Stein mit nestorianischem Kreuz und Resten einer sogdischen Inschrift»; «Bir Nasturi haçı ve Sogdca yazı izleri taşıyan taş.»

[41] L'alpinista ed esploratore Gottfried Merzbacher (1843-1926) condusse spedizioni in Asia centrale, nella regione del Tian Shan (Merzbacher 1905).

[42] Nome proprio siriaco femminile piuttosto diffuso tra le cristiane d'Asia centrale, equivale al greco "Anastasis", ovvero "Resurrezione".

nestoriane vi sono state trovate a partire dal 1901.[43] Sul posto non sono documentate presenze cristiane o cristiano-sogdiane nel IX secolo, mentre della quarantina di epitaffi di Almaliq oggi noti[44] i quattro datati menzionano anni tra il 1602 AG e il 1683 AG (1290 e 1372 dell'era volgare). In questo lasso di tempo si collocano con ogni verosimiglianza anche le epigrafi non datate.

L'incisione in riserva caratterizza la produzione locale: su 40 pietre, 25 sono incise in questo modo. Gli epitaffi con soli nome ed età sono 21 su 40. La pietra del *Museo dei cinque continenti* non risulta tra quelle pubblicate da Pantusov e Kokovcov. Probabilmente Merzbacher la prese prima che Pantusov raccogliesse i reperti locali o i loro calchi a inchiostro. Merzbacher non fornisce alcuna notizia sulla sua attività a Guldja, solo brevemente menzionata come tappa.[45]

Le modalità dell'acquisizione, tramite un esploratore in Asia centrale, ricordano quelle dell'unica altra pietra tombale nestoriana di Almaliq conservata in un museo europeo, il Museum of Cultures di Helsinki:[46] in Finlandia la portò Gustav Mannerheim, che visitò Guldja durante il viaggio da Samarcanda a Pechino negli anni 1906-1908.[47]

[43] La scoperta delle pietre tombali nestoriane di Almaliq è narrata da Pantusov 1902. Furono pubblicate da P. Kokovcov tra il 1905 (undici epitaffi, sei dalle pietre originali e cinque da calchi a inchiostro) e il 1907 (dieci, dalle pietre originali) (Kokovcov 1905, 1907). Nel 1910 un articolo postumo di Pantusov pubblica undici calchi a inchiostro, dieci dei quali corrispondono a lapidi precedentemente pubblicate da Kokovcov, una è nuova (Pantusov 1910).

[44] Sono trentanove i reperti noti, sparsi tra la Russia (Mosca, San Pietroburgo, Kazan') e la Cina (Pechino, Ürümqi), o di localizzazione ignota (Borbone – Mikheeva 2023). Nel settembre 2023 la dottoressa Lin Lijuan, Università di Pechino, mi ha segnalato la presenza al Museo regionale del Xinjiang – regione autonoma uigura, Ürümqi – di una quarantesima pietra finora ignota il cui stile la fa rientrare senza dubbio nel corpus di Almaliq.

[45] Merzbacher 1905, 273-275.

[46] Inv. N. VK 4803:535 (#0633). Il caso vuole che porti l'epitaffio di un'altra Qyamtā: «Se ne andò la questo mondo la credente Qyamtā, nell'anno 1683 (1371/2 AD).» L'iscrizione è incisa in riserva e senza croce, come altre due lapidi di Almaliq.

[47] Carl Gustav Emil Mannerheim (1867-1951), che dopo una carriera nell'esercito russo divenne Presidente della Repubblica di Finlandia (1944-1946).

Mentre correggo le bozze di questo contributo, ricevo il 18 aprile 2026 l'immagine di una pietra tombale cristiana esposta a Tashkent nel Centro per la Civiltà Islamica in Uzkekistan (O'zbekistondagi Islom sivilizatsiyasi markazi). La didascalia la dice scoperta in "Maverannahr" (Transoxiana) e risalente al dodicesimo-quattordicesimo secolo: "esemplare unico di arte e cultura rispecchiante le tradizioni religiose cristiane", la pietra documenta "la natura multiforme dei nessi culturali interreligiosi… nel Medioevo". In realtà il ritrovamento avvenne tra il 1975 e il 1980 presso Kara-Dzhigach, il villaggio sul sito dell'antico cimitero di Pishpek. Fotografata *in situ* e pubblicata nel 2000 e 2010, nel 2013 la pietra è comparsa nel catalogo di una casa d'aste del Regno Unito. Ci si può rallegrare che sia ora esibita in una sede pubblica di prestigio. Proveniente dal cimitero di Pishpek, l'epitaffio indica il 1603 AG, "Anno del Serpente" (= 1293/4 AD), come data della morte della "credente Mengü Bilgä".

Di fronte a questo terzo svarione in mostra, se non si può rinunciare a ricordare quale sia la storia autentica dei reperti coinvolti, non si può neppure negare simpatia e solidarietà a chi li ha voluti esporre offrendoli al pubblico come testimonianza esemplare di convivenza tra religioni.

3. Appendice: pietre tombali citate

#0002 Sluckij 1889, N. 142; Chwolson 1890, N. 61 (142)
#0004 Sluckij 1889, N. 138; Chwolson 1890, N. 66 (138)
#0006 Sluckij 1889, N. 105; Chwolson 1890, N. 73 (105)
#0010 Sluckij 1889, N. 135; Chwolson 1890, N. 75,2 (135)
#0014 Sluckij 1889, N. 157; Chwolson 1890, N. 81 (157)
#0015 Sluckij 1889, N. 127; Chwolson 1890, N. 83 (127)
#0019 Sluckij 1889, N. 57; Chwolson 1890, N. 92 (57)
#0022 Sluckij 1889, N. 186; Chwolson 1890, N. 97,2 (186)
#0026 Sluckij 1889, N. 162; Chwolson 1890, N. 98,1 (162)
#0036 Sluckij 1889, N. 121; Chwolson 1890, N. 3,1 (121)
#0074 Sluckij 1889, N. 120; Chwolson 1890, N. 27,1 (120)
#0088 Chwolson 1890, N. 35

#0214 Chwolson 1897, N. 5
#0216 Chwolson 1897, N. 7
#0235 Chwolson 1897, N. 25
#0238 Chwolson 1897, N. 27
#0246 Chwolson 1897, N. 34
#0256 Chwolson 1897, N. 44
#0285 Chwolson 1897, N. 71
#0343 Chwolson 1897, N. 127
#0409 Chwolson 1897, N. 193
#0434 Chwolson 1897, N. 216
#0521 Chwolson 1897, N. 304
#0526 Chwolson 1897, N. 309
#0550 Kokovcov 1905, N. 5
#0577 Dzhumagulov 1987, N. 5
#0633 Kokovcov 1905, N. 8; Borbone 2021, 107-111
#0634 Dickens 2009, N. 3

4. Figure

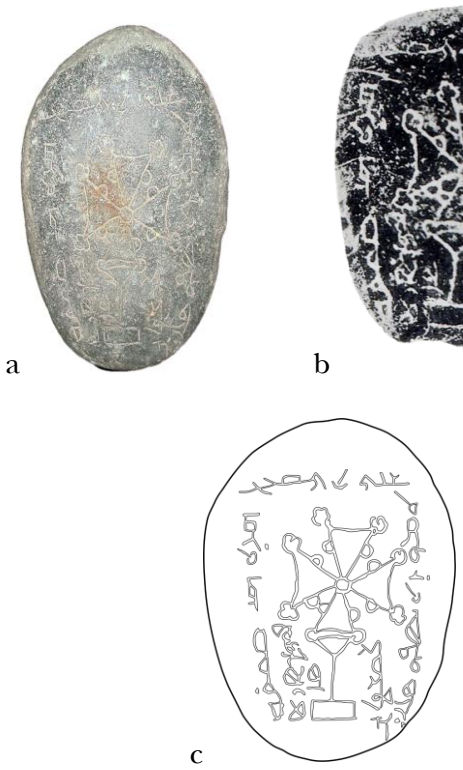


Fig. 1: Pietra tombale #0214 (1573 AG): a. fotografia da Rante-Lintz 2022; b. calco a inchiosto da Chwolson 1897; c. disegno di P.G. Borbone.

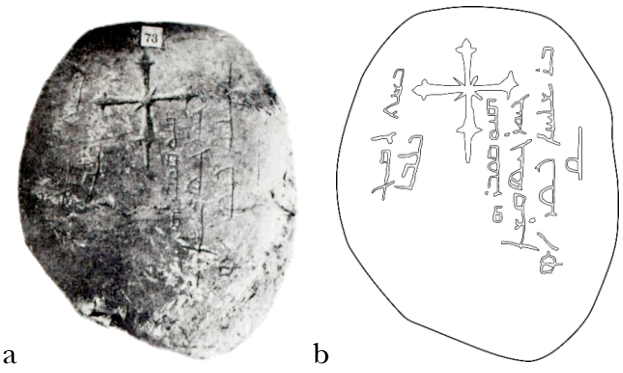


Fig. 2: Pietra tombale #0006 (1573 AG): a. fotografia da Chwolson 1897; b. disegno di P.G. Borbone.

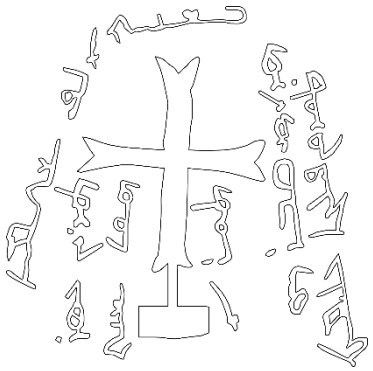
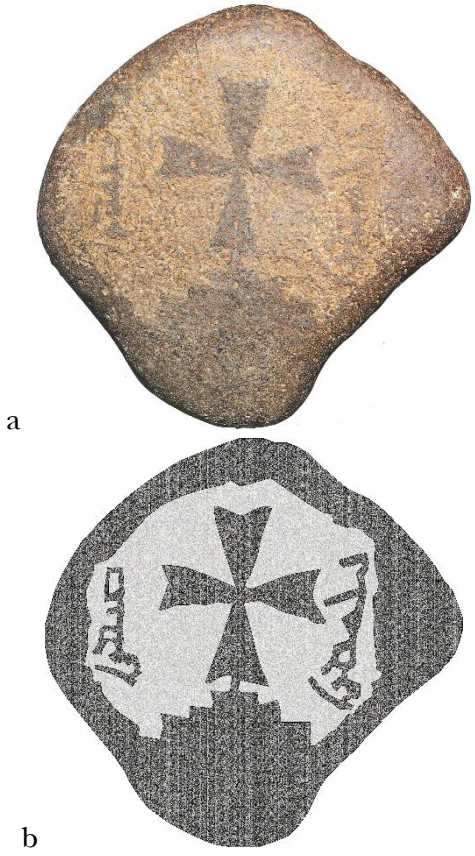


Fig. 3: Pietra tombale #0256 (1612 AG), disegno di P.G. Borbone.



a

b

Fig. 4: Pietra tombale #0700; a. fotografia da Cengiz Han 2006; b. disegno di P.G. Borbone.

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La Storia Ecclesiastica di Giovanni di Efeso sull'imperatore Maurizio: un tentativo di prospettiva giuridica

VALERIO MASSIMO MINALE

The paper presents an overview of the events concerning the life of the last of the Justinians, the Emperor Maurice (r. 582-602), as they can be evinced from John of Ephesus' *Ecclesiastical Chronicle*. This text, lost in its original form, but transmitted thanks to other Syriac chronicles, presents an interesting witness not only of the turmoil and events that took place at the very end of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the Byzantine Empire, but also of the legislations and juridical approaches that were taken at the time.

Keywords: Emperor Maurice – Legislation – John of Ephesus – War and Diplomacy

1. Introduzione

La legislazione di Maurizio,[1] che regnò dalla morte di Tiberio II (582) all'usurpazione di Foca (602), non è mai stata oggetto, a quanto mi consta, di uno studio organico. In effetti, nella raccolta delle costituzioni imperiali redatta dallo Zachariae von Lingenthal[2] si conserva soltanto, a parte la semplice citazione di un paio di editti,[3] una sentenza di condanna, che a sua volta evoca

[1] Cfr. Schlosser 1994.

[2] Zachariae von Lingenthal 1857 (= Zepos, Zepos 1931 e 1962), 26-27.

[3] Si tratta di due *rubricae*, provenienti dal Cod. Marc. 179, rispettivamente sull'esonero, per gli abitanti di Costantinopoli, dall'obbligo di cedere le

un giudizio di natura criminale, in tema di omicidio del naufrago.[4] Ad un simile scarno lascito andrebbero aggiunti alcuni luoghi dello *Strategikon*,[5] un manuale di arte militare che, come noto, venne riversato, in relazione ad indicazioni normative in esso contenute, nel *Nomos Stratiotikos*.[6]

Eppure, la documentazione registrata nella seconda edizione dei *Regesten* del Dölger risulta tutto sommato abbastanza cospicua:[7] quella documentazione deriva, oltre che dalla storiografia bizantina, che per l'imperatore armeno[8] si identifica soprattutto con l'opera di Teofilo Simocatta,[9] anche da fonti siriache.[10] E tra le fonti siriache, la *Storia Ecclesiastica* di Giovanni di Efeso[11] ovvero, più precisamente, ciò che ne rimane, costituisce un osservatorio privilegiato che merita senz'altro di continuare ad essere frequentato, nella misura in cui qualcosa di ulteriore può emergere rispetto alla semplice indicazione dei parlamentari che sarebbero avvenuti tra Maurizio e lo *shansha* Ormisda tra il 583 e il 584.[12]

abitazioni per l'acquartieramento delle truppe (*ut metatoricae domus tolantur*; Ἔδικτον Μαυρικίου Τιβερίου προτεθὲν τοῖς κωνσταντινουπολίταις παρακελευόμενον ἀναιρεῖσθαι τὰς μετατορικὰς οἰκήσις) e sulla fattispecie di omicidio praticato con l'uso delle pietre (*ut metatoricae domus tolantur*; Ἔδικτον Μαυρικίου Τιβερίου προτεθὲν τοῖς κωνσταντινουπολίταις παρακελευόμενον ἀναιρεῖσθαι τὰς μετατορικὰς οἰκήσις).

[4] Vd. Minale 2024 e Minale 2025.

[5] Cfr. Dennis – Gamillscheg 1981 e Dennis 1984; inoltre, vogliamo citare Freshfield 1947.

[6] Vd. Humphreys 2015, 152 ss.

[7] Dölger – Müller – Preiser-Kapeller – Riehle 2009, 28-53.

[8] Vd. Charanis 1965.

[9] L'opera, redatta in otto libri, rappresenta la fonte storiografica più importante sul regno di Maurizio: de Boor 1887 (testo); inoltre, Whitby – Whitby 1986 (traduzione) insieme con Whitby 1988 (ma anche Whitby 1983, 324 ss.).

[10] Vd. Goubert 1951, 11 ss. Cfr. Brock 1976.

[11] Brooks 1935-1936 (570/1-588).

[12] Dölger – Müller – Preiser-Kapeller – Riehle 2009, 29, n. 79c (81) dalla *Storia Ecclesiastica* di Giovanni di Efeso (6.37; Brooks 1935-1936, 259.1-10) e da quella di Michele il Siro (10.21; a c. Chabot, 2.361) (vd. nt. 24). Un'altra notizia, ma per il biennio 587/8, riguarda Gregorio, vescovo di Antiochia: Dölger – Müller – Preiser-Kapeller – Riehle 2009, 32, n. 89c (75) (HE 5.17).

L'ecclesiastico,[13] campione della chiesa miafisita[14] che, a suo tempo, non aveva riconosciuto il credo calcedonese, venne consacrato vescovo di Efeso da Giacomo Baradeo[15] intorno al 558. Qualche anno prima aveva partecipato al secondo concilio di Costantinopoli del 553,[16] voluto da Giustiniano, quale esponente di spicco della propria corrente:[17] del resto, egli aveva fatto parte della corte di religiosi monofisiti, seguaci di Severo di Antiochia,[18] di cui Teodora, fino a quando scomparve nel 548, si era andata circondando.[19] Missionario in Asia Minore contro pagani[20] ed eretici, in particolare montanisti,[21] poi a lungo perseguitato dal patriarca Giovanni Scolastico, al tempo di Giustino II, sarebbe rientrato a Costantinopoli nel 580, sotto Tiberio II e prossimo alla morte, quando, in occasione della visita di Mundhir[22] si celebrò un importante sinodo della chiesa, appunto, miafisita.

Le opere che ci rimangono, come sappiamo, sono le *Vite dei santi orientali*, le esistenze di cinquantotto asceti, monaci e sacerdoti appartenenti sempre allo schieramento non calcedonese,[23] ma soprattutto la *Storia Ecclesiastica*, di cui ci è giunta soltanto la terza parte, quasi completa, suddivisa in sei libri; alcune sezioni mancanti possono essere ricostruite, prestando una certa attenzione, soprattutto attraverso la cronaca di Michele il Siro.[24]

[13] Cfr. Ashbrook Harvey 1997, 553-564. Inoltre, Van Ginkel 1995.

[14] Cfr. Winkler 1997.

[15] Cfr. nt. 35.

[16] Cfr. Frank 1991; inoltre, Frend 1972, 255 ss. insieme con Gray 1979, 53 ss.

[17] Vd. Menze 2008b, 254 ss. (insieme con Menze 2008a).

[18] Cfr. Allen – Hayward 2004 e D'Alton –Youssef 2016.

[19] A riguardo, ci permettiamo di rinviare a Minale 2016.

[20] Cfr., oltre ad Engelhardt 1974; Leppin 2017; Whitby 1991; Ruggieri – Loda 1988; Trombley 1985.

[21] Vd. Gero 1977.

[22] È un personaggio che incontreremo più volte nel corso del nostro contributo: figlio di Harith e padre di Nu'man, che si rivelò il più vendicativo dei suoi quattro figli, fu a partire dal 570 re, filarca secondo la dicitura ufficiale, dai Ghassanidi, la tribù araba alleata di Bisanzio e nemica dei Lakhmidi, che, invece, furono filopersiani. Cfr. Shahîd 1995, 307 ss.

[23] Brooks 1923-1925. Inoltre, Ashbrook Harvey 1990.

[24] Chabot 1900-1910. Inoltre, la terza parte della *Cronaca di Zuqnin* raccoglie, nella sua terza parte, gli anni dal 488 al 578 della *Storia Ecclesiastica* di Giovanni di Efeso.

Non è certo questo il luogo per un'analisi del lavoro storiografico di Giovanni di Efeso.[25] Segnaliamo, semplicemente, almeno tre punti: dal punto di vista formale, il problema delle ripetizioni, di cui si legge in 2.50, dovute alla revisione del testo operata allorché, sotto Tiberio II e lo stesso Maurizio, il clima religioso era divenuto più sereno; dal punto di vista contenutistico, il fatto che la sua testimonianza consente di ricalibrare, per il periodo che ci riguarda, quella di Evagrio Scolastico – storico ecclesiastico di confessione calcedonese – che va dal 431, l'anno del Concilio di Efeso, al 593;[26] infine, dal punto di vista ideologico, la visione offerta in 3.1 e in 6.1 dove, in una sorta di interventi proemiali,[27] rispettivamente, la malattia mentale di Giustino II, descritta in III.3-4,[28] viene presentata come una punizione divina per la persecuzione dei miafisiti, mentre alla guerra tra Romani e Persiani viene attribuito un valore quasi apocalittico.[29]

2. Maurizio nella Storia Ecclesiastica *di Giovanni di Efeso*

2.1 Dal terzo al quinto libro

Maurizio appare per la prima volta nella *Storia Ecclesiastica* in 3.40,[30] al tempo di Tiberio II, che succede a Giustino II quale *comes excubitorum*, comandante della guardia imperiale, come narrato in 3.5-6. Il racconto delle vicende militari parte dal 578: incitato da Mundhir, che abbiamo poco sopra citato, Maurizio muove contro la Persia puntando su Ctesifonte, ma trova il ponte sull'Eufrate distrutto e incolpa l'alleato arabo di intelligenza con il nemico: entrambi, allora, scrivono all'imperatore, l'uno contro l'altro,

[25] Oltre a Honigmann 1939, variamente, Leppin 2019, Arcuri 2008, Bruns 2006, Van Ginkel 2005 (insieme con Van Ginkel 1994).

[26] Whitby 2000 e Carcione 1998; inoltre, Chesnut 1986², 215-33.

[27] Cfr., anche se, soprattutto, su Socrate e Sozomeno, Mazza 1980.

[28] Si legga anche 3.4-5, dove in seguito alla malattia di Giustino II viene fatto imperatore Tiberio II.

[29] Vd. Van Ginkel 2007.

[30] In verità, egli appare anche in precedenza: 2.49, in occasione di un grande incendio a Costantinopoli nel 582 (2.49) e in relazione ad alcuni processi contro i pagani ovvero cristiani idolatri (3.34).

anche se a sortire un effetto maggiore è l'accusa, meglio circostanziata, di Maurizio. Tiberio II, allora, ricorre al *curator* Magno, a sua volta amico di Mundhir, che però tradisce e fa arrestare con l'inganno (41), il che provoca la ribellione del figlio Nu'man e il conseguente assedio di Bosra, in Siria (42): la susseguente reazione bizantina si rivela del tutto inutile (43).

La narrazione della guerra, fortemente sintetizzata, continua dopo l'intronizzazione di Maurizio, realizzata a seguito della breve malattia del predecessore con l'imposizione del diadema di fronte al senato riunito, nel 582 (47): da un passo mutilo, apprendiamo che il nuovo sovrano decide subito di mandare in esilio Mundhir – imprigionato a Costantinopoli ed esiliato in Sicilia fino al 602, quando Maurizio muore – e che, dopo avere tentato di corrompere Nu'man per recuperarlo alla causa, invia anche il figlio presso il padre; l'alleato arabo, per il momento, appare irrimediabilmente perduto. Fino a questo punto, non si registrano atti normativi, se non quello relativo all'incoronazione di Maurizio, secondo lo schema tradizionale di investitura da parte dell'imperatore regnante e riconoscimento da parte del senato costantinopolitano.

Il quarto libro si apre con un *excursus* sulla cristianizzazione della Nubia e del popolo dei Nobadi, al tempo di Giustiniano e Teodora, i quali avrebbero ingaggiato una vera e propria competizione per assecondare, l'una, e ostacolare, l'altro, il papa Teodosio[31] e il beato Giuliano[32] (5 ss.); Longino,[33] invece, avrebbe convertito gli Etiopi: in verità, si tratta di un'altra popolazione, gli Alodi, che si era stabilizzata nel meridione dell'attuale Sudan (49-53).[34]

[31] A capo della chiesa alessandrina, per volere di Teodora, dal 535, viene presto deposto e poi ristabilito sul trono grazie all'intervento militare di Narsete: muore in prigionia nel 567.

[32] Missionario monofisita che venne coadiuvato da Teodoro, vescovo di Philae fino al 577.

[33] Inviato da papa Teodosio presso i regni nubiani nel 569, ne divenne il primo vescovo: morì nel 580.

[34] Vd. Suermann 1998.

Le intricate vicende dello scontro, all'interno della chiesa antiochena e, di conseguenza, anche alessandrina, tra Giacomo Baradeo[35] e Paolo detto il Nero,[36] che si sarebbero chiuse con la morte di entrambi (58 e 59), causarono forti ripercussioni sugli Arabi di Mundhir, miafisiti, prima che costui venisse fatto cadere da Tiberio II: egli, come aveva fatto il padre Harith, spingeva per una pacificazione (21). Ad un certo punto, però, anche le sue tribù si divisero (36) e Mundhir, in visita a Costantinopoli nel 580 una volta sconfitti i Lakhmidi, provò invano a stilare un documento d'unione (40), decidendo, disilluso, di ritirarsi ad Antiochia (42); ne seguì una coda di ulteriori torbidi (43).

In 4.46, un luogo pari per rilevanza ideologica ai brevi proemi di cui si è fatto cenno in precedenza, Giovanni promuove la giustizia, in base al diritto canonico, dell'operato di Giacomo, stigmatizzando i conflitti religiosi che suo malgrado aveva comunque dovuto raccontare.

Si apre, così, il quinto libro. In 5.13, come abbiamo già visto in forma più sintetica in 3.47, Tiberio augusto si affianca il cesare Maurizio, apostrofato nel testo quale "l'amante di Dio", gli concede in sposa la figlia Costantina e lo incorona prima di morire; subito dopo gli nasce il figlio Teodosio, così chiamato in onore di Teodosio II, che inaugura una nuova stirpe dinastica.[37] Addirittura, si dice che nessuno dell'intera catena imperiale da Teodosio II in poi sarebbe nato nella porpora, fino, appunto, al primogenito di Maurizio (14).

Maurizio non appena assurge al trono imperiale – a parte avvantaggiare i propri familiari (18), tra i quali Domiziano, che diviene vescovo calcedonese di Melitene (19), amministrare con oculatezza, mentre Tiberio II aveva dissipato il tesoro di Giustino

[35] Discepolo di Severo di Antiochia, fu consacrato vescovo di Edessa da papa Tedosio nel 541: morì nel 578. Rinviamo semplicemente a Bundy 1978.

[36] Patriarca di Antiochia fino alla sua deposizione nel 578, resistette al tentativo di unione con la chiesa egiziana. Cfr. Markschies 2011 e Van Rompay 2011.

[37] Costui, co-imperatore dal 590, sarebbe stato, insieme con gli altri cinque fratelli, eliminato da Foca: tuttavia, persistette la leggenda della sua sopravvivenza, testimoniata, per esempio, da Teofane Confessore (6095); addirittura, secondo la *Cronaca del Khuzestan* egli sarebbe stato re-incoronato dal *katholikos* a Ctesifonte per volere di Cosroe II.

II (e ancora, si legge, quello di Anastasio;[38] inoltre, 3.11), inaugurare una dispendiosa politica edilizia ad Arabisso, la sua città d'origine in Cappadocia (22), poi distrutta, quasi come per punizione divina, da un terremoto (23) – inizia a perseguitare, istigato da elementi provocatori, pagani, miafisiti (15) e ariani (16): per pagani e miafisiti venne usata misericordia, con l'irrogazione di rare condanne a morte e all'esilio tra i senatori e, quindi, l'interruzione dell'intera indagine su consiglio del patriarca; per gli altri, invece, la cronaca registra che il popolo fu lasciato irrompere nel loro principale luogo di culto, distruggendo e saccheggiando.

In effetti, l'ondata antiereticale ebbe un freno nel patriarca e nell'imperatore, i quali riuscirono a resistere ai disegni di chi ambiva soltanto a furti e rapine di beni (21).

Financo il processo per paganesimo a Gregorio, vescovo di Antiochia,[39] terminò nel perdono, dopo che il prelato si fu presentato presso la capitale carico di oro, argento e tessuti preziosi, ed ebbe corrotto tutti, imperatore, patriarca e senatori, tornando nella propria sede con la promessa dell'edificazione di un circo che avesse sedato anche il popolo, desideroso di spettacoli (17; inoltre, 3.29 ss.).

Qui è forse possibile estrapolare qualche notizia di carattere giuridico, nella misura in cui apprendiamo che le procedure criminali previste per i reati contro la fede cristiana, che potevano condurre alla confisca del patrimonio o, in casi particolari, addirittura alla morte del reo, sovente nascevano per interessi personali attraverso denunce strumentali; nella celebrazione di queste procedure, è evidente, imperatore e patriarca procedevano all'unisono, collaborando e alleggerendo oppure appesantendo la mano a seconda della convenienza.[40]

[38] Si tratta di un vero e proprio *topos*: vd. Motta 2003, *passim*; comunque, Meier 2009, 118 ss. e Haarer 2006, 184 ss.

[39] Egli fu patriarca dal 570 al 593: Evagrio Scolastico, *Historia Ecclesiastica* V.6; cfr. Lee 2007.

[40] Sui poteri giurisdizionali di imperatore e patriarca nei procedimenti contro gli eretici ci permettiamo di rinviare, anche se in merito ad un periodo diverso, a Minale 2020.

2.2 Il sesto libro

Il sesto libro è interamente dedicato alla guerra contro i Sassanidi. Appena dopo l'apertura inizia la narrazione degli avvenimenti, in cui, osservando con attenzione, è possibile scorgere qualche elemento normativo, soprattutto per quanto concerne la diplomazia praticata dall'impero bizantino e, però, anche in merito agli ordini emanati per reclutare l'esercito e organizzare la campagna.

Marciano, patrizio e cognato di Giustino II, muove contro Nisibi, ma l'imperatore invia un tale Acacio per richiamarlo e i Bizantini, in confusione, vengono respinti e sconfitti (2); Giustino II – circostanza già incontrata – si era infatti inimicato Mundhir, che aveva nel frattempo sconfitto Quabus, a sua volta alleato dei Persiani, ordinando allo stesso Marciano di eliminarlo: tuttavia, in capo a tre anni, nel 575, vengono ristabilite relazioni amichevoli (3-4). Il nemico, quindi, riesce dopo sei mesi ad espugnare, grazie pure alle macchine d'assedio abbandonate a Nisibi, la fortezza di Dara l'anno dopo e cioè nel 573 (5),[41] infine il *marzban* Adarmahan prende Apamea (6).

Segue il racconto, drammatico, del sacrificio di duemila fanciulle prigioniere dei Persiani e destinate ad altre popolazioni, Turchi o Avari, che si suicidano nel gorgo del fiume, mentre fanno il bagno, per non rassegnarsi ad una vita in servitù e soprattutto alla perdita della fede cristiana (7): il punto specifico, alla luce di quanto potremo osservare tra poco, presenta una notevole rilevanza in relazione al tema dei rapporti diplomatici.

La tregua che viene siglata dopo la perdita di Dara, che conduce Giustino II alla pazzia, in cambio di tre centenari d'oro per un triennio, viene quasi subito sconsacrata da Cosroe, il quale, nel 576, tenta di conquistare Teodosiopoli in Armenia – addirittura, si sarebbe vantato di lasciare libero il *silentiarios*

[41] L'episodio del traduttore Cometa è indicativo della situazione di confusione generale. Durante il feroce assedio, i Persiani provarono a comprare la resa dei Romani, servendosi, appunto, di un traduttore, chiamato Cometa: costui, però, non trasmise la proposta di Cosroe, il quale, una volta impadronitosi della città, preferì non punirlo per il suo comportamento ambiguo che gli aveva fatto perdere tempo e uomini, ma risparmiare una grande quantità di oro.

Teodoro, venuto per trattare con lui, soltanto dopo un bagno rinfrescante nella città romana, una volta che fosse stata conquistata – e poi Cesarea in Cappadocia, ma riesce soltanto a devastare Sebaste, per ritorsione (8). Nondimeno, a causa della discordia, secondo Giovanni, tra i comandanti romani, sconfigge il *magister militum* Giustiniano e arriva e bruciare Melitene, ma, rifiutandosi di dare battaglia campale, è costretto ad attraversare in fretta e furia l'Eufrate dove, nei flutti, periscono molti dei suoi soldati: in questa occasione promulga una legge per cui un re avrebbe potuto combattere soltanto contro un altro re, onde neutralizzare il rischio di morire per nulla (9), mentre i Romani che avevano invaso la Persarmenia, commettendo atroci violenze pure sui cristiani locali, premuti a loro volta dal *marzban* Tamkhusro vanno incontro alla disfatta (10-11).

Nel 577 ha luogo un'importante ambasceria, che viene attentamente descritta in 6.12. La parte romana inviò Giovanni, figlio del *magister officiorum* Pietro, i consoli Giovanni e Pietro, discendenti di Anastasio,[42] insieme con Zaccaria di Sura, medico e filosofo; la parte persiana Mahbodh e altri dignitari. L'incontro avvenne presso la fortezza di Dara e durò un anno intero, tra accuse reciproche e tentativi di riconciliazione: le trattative, oltre che sul risarcimento di guerra, si arenarono sulla restituzione dell'Armenia alla Persia in cambio proprio di Dara, piazzaforte che costituiva, è evidente, il pomo della discordia. Peraltro, era noto che i Persiani si erano vantati con i Turchi del fatto che i Romani fossero loro schiavi perché gli pagavano un tributo, il che li fece, giustamente, infuriare.

Ripresero, quindi, le ostilità per mano del *marzban* Adarmahan (13) e – si tratta di un'altra ripetizione: abbiamo, infatti, di nuovo l'episodio del ponte distrutto sull'Eufrate verso Ctesifonte (16) – il comando venne affidato a Maurizio, verosimilmente nel 578, che vendica la devastazione della Sofamene con quella dell'Arzanene (14-15). I Persiani sciamano nell'Osroene e devastano la regione di Edessa (17), Mundhir miete le sue vittorie (18): addirittura, Antiochia di Ctesifonte ovvero al-Rumiyya,

[42] Cfr. Cameron 1978.

costruita al tempo delle campagne precedenti, torna ad essere la città di raccolta dei prigionieri, senza che la fuga di alcuni di loro riesca a convincere Tiberio II ad intervenire per soccorrerli (19).

Di notevole interesse appaiono i paragrafi 14 e 15: nel primo, a Maurizio, che si reca subito in Cappadocia e poi a Citharizon, in Armenia, per creare un esercito, viene conferita dall'imperatore mediante un decreto l'autorità di creare e comandare i *magistri militum* e i *tribuni militum*, cioè gli ufficiali apicali e intermedi, un compito che egli assolve in capo a due mesi mediante altri decreti; nel secondo, egli, diversamente da quanto era accaduto in precedenza, salva la vita ai cristiani della regione conquistata qualora, in capo a tre giorni e con l'ausilio di qualsiasi cavalcatura, si fossero allontanati migrando, in buona sostanza, oltre il *limes* che divideva i due imperi.

In 6.20, invece, l'attenzione si sposta sulla situazione interna all'impero sassanide, dove lo *shansha* Cosroe respinge gli attacchi che il *katholikos* andava formulando contro i cristiani miafisiti (20): verosimilmente entrambi i sovrani cercavano di promuovere la tolleranza religiosa in un momento di grave scontro militare. Lo stesso Cosroe ricercava la pace, eppure muore prima di poterla realizzare, nel 579 (21).

Ormisda, il figlio, è un sovrano feroce e al momento della successione non solo si rifiutò di inviare i consueti doni all'imperatore bizantino, ma fece anche imprigionare gli ambasciatori giunti per rendergli omaggio, liberandoli ad un certo punto soltanto per indirizzarli, sulla via del ritorno, su una pista sbagliata attraverso montagne disabitate, da cui uscirono vivi in maniera fortunosa (22).

6.23, ancora, ospita il racconto della missione di Zemarco presso i Göktürk, i Turchi Celesti, popolazione turcica[43] che, sconfitti gli Eftaliti,[44] si era posizionata, nel corso del sesto secolo, in modo tale da controllare i Sogdiani, i quali da sempre rappresentavano il tramite commerciale tra Cina e Persia lungo la

[43] Cfr. Golden 1992; inoltre, Sinor 1996 e 1990.
[44] Cfr. Litvinsky 1996.

via della seta:[45] anzi, una delle ragioni per cui era sorta l'inimicizia tra Bizantini e Sassanidi, origine della rottura della pace e motivo dell'inizio della guerra, era stato proprio il tentativo, da parte di Giustino II, di stringere un'alleanza con quei Turchi. A parte l'episodio del pianto irrefrenabile del sovrano, che si ricordò di una storia per cui quando fossero giunti i Romani sarebbe finito il loro regno, il dato rilevante è, di nuovo, la diceria diffusa dai Persiani sul supposto servaggio dei Romani, prontamente smentita da Zemarco, il quale, invece, racconta che da qualche parte nell'impero sassanide esisteva una statua di Traiano, oggetto di venerazione; Ormisda, saputo ciò, ordina che venga subito rimossa.

In realtà, la missione di Zemarco richiede un maggiore inquadramento storico. Essa si inserisce all'interno dei rapporti diplomatici tra l'impero bizantino e il mondo turco:[46] una legazione, ricordata da Teofane di Bisanzio (attraverso Fozio)[47] e Teofane il Confessore,[48] avrebbe fatto visita alla corte di Giustino II nel 563, anche se viene ritenuta non veritiera dalla maggioranza della storiografia specialistica. La prima ambasceria sicura si realizza nel 568, quando il *khagan* Sizabul,[49] che nelle fonti greche, in particolare da Menandro Protettore,[50] è chiamato Dissabulo (Sizaboulos o Silziboulos), decide di inviare un mercante sogdiano, Maniah, sempre a Giustino II, per proporre un'alleanza in funzione antipersiana soprattutto in relazione al commercio della seta grezza.[51] L'anno seguente l'inviato del regno

[45] Per tutti, de La Vaissière 2004², ma anche de La Vassière 2024, 177 ss.

[46] Cfr., oltre a Moravcsik 1958², 1 ss. (e 165 ss. sulle fonti bizantine; inoltre, Macartney 1944), Whittow 2018 e Qiang, Kordosis 2018; più specificatamente, ancora Kordosis 2011 (insieme con Kordosis 2012) e Palaz Erdemir 2004.

[47] *Bibliotheca* 64; Bekker 1824, 26.

[48] *Chronographia* 203; Classen 1839, 371.

[49] Costui sarebbe Istemi che si ritrova nell'iscrizione bilingue, in cinese e in antica lingua turcica, delle steli di Orkhon, in Mongolia, erette in onore di Kul Tigin e del fratello Bilge Khagan, risalenti all'VIII secolo: almeno, Ross 1930.

[50] *De legationibus romanorum ad gentes* 7-9: Boissevai – De Boor – Büttner-Wobst 1903; Blockley 1985, 110-127.

[51] Teofilo Simocatta, in 3.9, afferma che i Romani avrebbero accusato i Persiani di avere assoldato gli Alani affinché uccidessero i membri della missione diplomatica dei Turchi Celesti.

turco viene accompagnato nel viaggio di ritorno, appunto, da Zemarco, *magister militum per Orientem* originario della Cilicia, che a sua volta, raggiunta una "montagna d'oro", probabilmente la catena del Tian Shan o i monti Altai, rientra, pieno di meraviglia e attraverso un lungo percorso, costeggiando un grande lago che è probabilmente l'Aral;[52] infine, l'ultima missione, sfortunata, è quella di un tale Valentinus nel 575/6, quando ormai i rapporti tra i Bizantini e Turchi si erano irrimediabilmente guastati.

6.24 e 25 sono dedicati, rispettivamente, ad altri rapporti diplomatici, quelli con gli Avari[53] e gli Sclaveni; quindi, alle loro aggressioni militari.[54] Gli Avari erano stati mantenuti in pace dal danaro di Giustiniano; quando Giustino II volle interrompere questa prassi, essi si ribellarono: si impadronirono del ponte in legno sul Danubio che i Romani avevano costruito e da lì penetravano nel territorio dell'impero per compiere terribili incursioni, puntando su Sirmio (24). La città sarebbe stata conquistata al tempo di Tiberio II (30): egli, allora, inviò lo *spatharius* Narsete con un esercito e carico d'oro, per addivenire ad un accordo, ma le navi affondarono per una tempesta nel Mar Nero ed egli ne morì di crepacuore (31), mentre gli Avari entravano a Sirmio (32), che finì per ardere, loro malgrado, in un grande incendio (33).

Gli Sclaveni, d'altra parte, avrebbero razziato ad ondate successive la Tessaglia e la Tracia, arrivando a minacciare la stessa Costantinopoli (25): delle loro scorrerie, tra il 584 e il 586, sono testimonianza i celeberrimi *Miracoli di San Demetrio*.[55]

Siamo, nella narrazione di Giovanni di Efeso, alla parte finale della guerra. Dopo un tentativo di abboccamento tra i due belligeranti, affidato per la parte romana ad alcuni vescovi e, di nuovo, a Zaccaria di Sura, il *marzban* Tamkhusro – il quale sarebbe caduto poco dopo sotto la città di Costantina, combattendo

[52] Vd. Dickens 2016; inoltre, Dobrovits 2011.

[53] Cfr. Kardaras 2019; inoltre, Pohl 2018, 69 ss.

[54] Gli Sclaveni insieme con gli Anti, protoslavi, giunsero a seguito degli Avari, insediandosi nei Balcani: cfr. Curta 2018, 120 ss. e Curta 2006, 39 ss.

[55] Lemerle 1979, 130 ss. (*Recueil de l'Archevêque Jean*) e 180 ss. (*Recueil Anonyme*).

contro Maurizio –[56] avanza e sconfigge i Romani nella battaglia di Tella nel 582 (26). Lo stesso Maurizio, allora, che di lì a poco sarebbe stato l'imperatore e che qui, oltre al solito titolo di *comes excubitorum*, viene indicato come "notaio" di Tiberio II, viene investito del comando supremo e, di conseguenza, viene posto nella condizione di emanare ordini militari, veri e propri editti, per arruolare l'esercito e prepararsi allo scontro, partendo dalla sua Arabisso e poi dall'Armenia, collocato il campo sempre a Citharizon; a questo punto, i Persiani devastano la Sofamene, i Romani l'Arzanene (27).

Intanto, il grosso delle truppe, che si trovava nella Persarmenia, rumoreggiava in attesa del pagamento del soldo: Tiberio II, saggiamente, invia l'oro necessario e così il *magister militum* Kurs è in grado di piombare sui Persiani, facendone strage (28). Nel frattempo, a seguito della morte di Cosroe era emerso un falso erede, che si spacciava per un figlio dello *shansha* che il successore, Ormisda, non avrebbe fatto uccidere, secondo il costume persiano: dopo un iniziale momento di gloria, sempre in Persarmenia, costui venne riconosciuto da un ufficiale persiano in missione diplomatica e imprigionato, anche se non giustiziato (29).

Continuano le imprese vittoriose di Maurizio: le operazioni di Persiani e Romani, rispettivamente, in Sofamene e Arzanene costituiscono l'ennesima ripetizione, anche se qui si dice che i prigionieri vennero inviati sull'isola di Cipro (34); egli occupa ulteriori territori ed edifica la fortezza di Šamkast, su un alto colle (35); un'altra ne conquista, Aqba, oltre il fiume Kallath, presso Martiropoli, in una zona di continui cambi di fronte (36). Infine, nel 583, i Persiani chiedono la pace (37). Ci si avviava, così, verso l'armistizio di una guerra, lunga ed estenuante,[57] che aveva preso avvio quando, nel 571, l'Armenia, regno cristiano, insieme con Iberia e Lazica, nel complesso mosaico del Caucaso, aveva inteso svincolarsi dalla supremazia dell'impero sassanide, sottraendogli la città di Dvin[58] e sconvolgendo l'ordine costituito dalla pace,

[56] Theoph. Sim. *Hist.* 3.18.

[57] Cfr. Greatrex – Lieu 2002, 135 ss. Vogliamo citare, inoltre, Higgins 1939.

[58] Fu proprio il *catholicos* di Dvin a testimonare, tra gli altri, delle reciproche persecuzioni religiosi attuate prima dai Romani e poi dai Persiani, i cui

cinquantennale negli intenti di Giustiniano e Cosroe, siglata tra il 561 e il 562.

3. Note conclusive

Qualche sintetica considerazione finale, nella consapevolezza che l'argomento meriterebbe che l'analisi venisse estesa anche ad altri autori, in particolare agli storici armeni, ma anche meglio integrato con le fonti della storiografia bizantina; inoltre, il fatto che i termini specifici relativi alla sfera del giuridico si presentino, per chi non conosca la lingua siriaca, in traduzione, comporta che a riguardo si debba immaginare un ulteriore sforzo, magari in collaborazione con altri studiosi.[59]

Giovanni, concentrato sulla storia ecclesiastica e, però, egualmente attento alle vicende militari (e alle loro ricadute politiche) sembra operare un confronto tra Giustino II (565-578), Tiberio II (578-582) e Maurizio (582-602), che vengono posti in una sorta di *climax* ascendente, dal peggiore al migliore, in relazione sia all'andamento della guerra in Oriente sia alla gestione delle questioni religiose: per esempio, il cambiamento della politica delle persecuzioni contro i miafisiti,[60] indicati nell'intera opera significativamente come "ortodossi",[61] costituisce la cifra di un regno sempre più improntato alla tolleranza (per esempio, 6.15).

Poco, purtroppo, emerge per quanto concerne l'attività legislativa di Maurizio, che pure all'inizio della carriera era stato "notaio" (6.27) ovvero, più correttamente, "giudice", in base al termine ὕπαρχος a cui ricorre il solito Teofilo Simocatta.[62] Secondo un'altra tradizione, contenuta in una sua biografia in siriaco,[63] l'imperatore sarebbe stato profondamente impegnato nelle questioni giuridiche utili al governo dello stato, così come avrebbe avuto un animo pieno di

governatori e lo stesso sovrano erano fomentati dai *magi*, i sacerdoti del culto zoroastriano (2.18 ss.).

[59] Cfr. Brock 1975; Taylor 2002.

[60] Giustino II: 3.2, ma anche 1.18-20; Tiberio II: 3.13 e 15, poi 21-22.

[61] Vd. Ashbrook Harvey 1988.

[62] Whitby 1988, 5.

[63] Nau 1910, 773: vd. Wortley 1980.

giustizia, umana e divina.[64] Tuttavia, già in qualità di cesare, al quale viene ripetutamente affidato il comando supremo dell'esercito, e poi dopo, appena divenuto augusto, egli dimostra un'attitudine normativa e processuale che osserviamo, in particolare, nell'allestimento delle campagne e nei giudizi contro gli eretici in cui dimostra da una parte di possedere ottime doti organizzative e dall'altra di conoscere l'uso della clemenza.

Il regno di Maurizio segna un momento di passaggio: l'impero da "romano" diventa "bizantino" e per quanto concerne il diritto questa trasformazione viene sancita dall'uso ormai totalizzante del greco nelle costituzioni e dal consolidarsi di una figura di autocrate impegnato tanto nella sfera religiosa, nel tentativo di comporre i dissidi teologici sulla natura del Cristo, quanto in campo militare, nella diuturna lotta contro i barbari, all'epoca Avari e Slavi, e contro la Persia dei Sassanidi; del resto, così avevano fatto gli immediati successori di Giustiniano, Giustino II e Tiberio II, così avrebbe fatto Eraclio. La testimonianza offerta dalla *Storia Ecclesiastica* di Giovanni di Efeso ci consegna, a suo modo, il senso di un simile passaggio e di una simile trasformazione.

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[64] Ciò, indipendentemente dalla celebrazione che in seguito, al tempo di Eraclio, sarebbe stata compiuta di Maurizio, martire, lui e la sua famiglia, sotto la spada dell'usurpatore Foca: vd. Booth 2019.

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Rappresentazioni trinitarie nella più antica innografia cristiana: le Odi di Salomone

SABINO CHIALÀ

This paper discusses the anonymous set of hymns composed at the dawn of Christianity known as the *Odes of Solomon*. These texts, which defy any attribution to a specific author, context, and date, show deep connections with the Judeo-Christian milieu and present an impressively rich array of images and metaphors which will become quite prominent in the later Syriac poetry represented, for instance, by Ephrem the Syrian. The paper stresses the need to abandon all attempts to identify a specific "orthodoxy" in the hymns and proposes possible interpretative methodologies.

Keywords: *Odes of Solomon* – Syriac Hymnography – Trinity – Christology – Syriac Mysticism

La raccolta di testi poetici nota come *Odi di Salomone* costituisce una delle più antiche e originali attestazioni dell'innografia cristiana.[1] La sua esistenza era nota fin dall'antichità, poiché menzionata nella *Sticometira* di Niceforo e nella *Sinossi della Sacra Scrittura* dello Pseudo-Atanasio, ma il testo lo si riteneva perduto, ad eccezione della breve citazione contenuta nelle *Divine istituzioni* di Lattanzio (III-IV d.C.).[2] La riscoperta inizia nel 1812 quando nell'opera di

[1] Per l'edizione del testo siriaco, con traduzione inglese, si veda Charlesworth 1977.

[2] Sulle vicende relative al testo, rimando all'introduzione delle traduzioni italiana e francese in Erbetta 1975, 608-658 e Pierre 1994.

origine gnostica nota con il titolo *Pistis Sophia* (III d.C.), il cui manoscritto era stato ritrovato qualche decennio prima, furono riconosciute cinque delle *Odi di Salomone*, in lingua copta. Ma la svolta è databile al 1909, quando James Rendel Harris riconobbe «in un ammasso di fogli laceri e macchiati»[3] di un manoscritto relativamente tardivo (XV secolo) la collezione quasi completa delle *Odi*, in lingua siriaca. A quella scoperta seguirono studi, traduzioni ed edizioni, e anche l'identificazione di un ulteriore manoscritto della versione siriaca e di un frammento di quella greca.[4]

Circa la lingua originale, la datazione, l'autore e l'ambiente, sono state avanzate varie ipotesi, anche molto divergenti tra loro. La posizione più condivisa è che si tratti di un'opera composta da un autore anonimo, essendo l'attribuzione a Salomone chiaramente fittizia, in ambito siriaco, probabilmente giudeo-cristiano, in un'epoca compresa tra la fine del I secolo della nostra era e gli inizi del III. Da un punto di vista formale, essa ricorda la letteratura sapienziale veterotestamentaria, gli *Inni* della comunità di Qumran, i *Salmi di Salomone*, cui è associata nei manoscritti noti, il Vangelo secondo Giovanni. La composizione è raffinata e il lessico ampio, con allitterazioni particolarmente efficaci. Circa la destinazione, è abbastanza probabile che le *Odi* abbiamo conosciuto un qualche uso liturgico. Ciò sembra attestato dall'acclamazione alleluiatica che chiude ciascuna composizione, oltre ai vari passi in cui è possibile scorgere allusioni alla liturgia battesimale ed eucaristica. Ulteriore caratteristica degna di nota è che non si riscontra alcuna citazione esplicita dell'AT e del NT, anche se i componimenti sono intessuti di concetti e reminiscenze bibliche.

A motivo della loro antichità, sicuramente di epoca pre-nicena, e della loro origine, con buona probabilità giudeo-cristiana, le *Odi*

[3] Citato in Charlesworth 1977, 4.

[4] Allo stato attuale delle ricerche, abbiamo: in siriaco la raccolta quasi completa delle 42 odi (mancano la prima, la seconda e l'inizio della terza); in copto, le odi prima (nota solo in questa lingua), quinta, sesta, ventiduesima e venticinquesima; in greco, l'ode undicesima; in latino, due versi dell'ode diciannovesima (6-7a).

mostrano tratti peculiari e particolarmente interessanti circa le immagini con cui rappresentano la divinità e le interrelazioni trinitarie, tratto su cui vorrei ritornare in questo contributo, proponendo infine una considerazione metodologica riguardo all'analisi di testi come questo, che offro con animo grato all'illustre studioso e caro amico Riccardo Contini.

1. Il Dio trinitario e l'economia della salvezza

Uno dei temi che più ha attratto l'attenzione degli studiosi, fin dagli anni immediatamente successivi alla riscoperta del testo siriaco delle *Odi*, è quello della cristologia, che mostra chiari e interessanti tratti di arcaicità, benché dall'interpretazione controversa.[5] Meno indagato risulta invece il contesto triadologico e in particolare le relazioni intratrinitarie, dalle quale invece vorrei iniziare questa analisi.

Una prima considerazione importante riguarda il fatto che nelle *Odi* si riflette la fede di una comunità in cui la rappresentazione trinitaria della divinità è già chiaramente presente. Per un'epoca così arcaica non è scontato che le tre persone siano a tal punto chiaramente distinte nei nomi e, in certa misura, anche nelle funzioni[6] come mostra ad esempio un passo dell'ode ventitreesima dove leggiamo:

17. La lettera conteneva il comando
    che si radunassero insieme tutti, dai vari luoghi.
18. Nel suo principio si mostrò il Capo, che si rivelò
    e il Figlio vero, [proveniente] dal Padre altissimo.
19. Questi ereditò ogni cosa, e la ricevette,
    mentre andò a vuoto il tramare di molti.
20. Tutti gli apostati, infatti, tentarono e [poi] fuggirono,
    e si dileguarono i persecutori e furono tolti di mezzo.
21. La lettera consisteva in una grande tavola
    interamente scritta con il dito di Dio.

[5] Cf. McNeil 1978a e 1978b; Lattke 1991; Azar 2001; Colpe 2007; Bakker 2019.
[6] Un utile repertorio è in Terzoli 1974.

22. Su di essa vi erano il nome del Padre
e del Figlio e dello Spirito santo.
Regnino nei secoli dei secoli!
Alleluja.[7]

La grande lettera/tavola, scritta con il dito di Dio come le tavole della Legge (cf. Es 31,18), riprende l'immagine delle tavole celesti della tradizione giudaica,[8] riferendosi al contempo all'insieme delle Scritture, in cui è narrata la storia della salvezza, dalla generazione del Figlio, nell'in-principio (*b-rish-ho*), fino alla passione e al trionfo del Cristo. In tale storia si rivelano gradualmente il "Capo (*risho*)," cioè il Padre, e il Figlio che è da lui. Alla fine il testo ricorda che su quella lettera/tavola sono distintamente incisi i tre nomi, destinati a regnare per i secoli, cui dunque è riconosciuta piena consonanza di azione. Come a dire che quella storia di salvezza porta il segno dell'azione concorde e sinfonica delle tre persone della Trinità.

Un secondo passo in cui queste ultime sono menzionate insieme è costituito dall'ode diciannovesima, certamente tra le più celebri, anche a motivo delle discussioni suscitate dalle immagini impiegate:

1. Mi fu offerta una coppa di latte
e ne ho bevuto, per la soave dolcezza del Signore.
2. Il Figlio era la coppa,
colui che era munto era il Padre
e chi lo munse era lo Spirito santo.
3. Poiché i seni del [Padre] erano pieni
e non era bene che il suo latte si versasse a caso,
4. lo Spirito santo aprì il proprio petto
e mescette il latte dei due seni del Padre.
5. Egli diede la mistura al mondo ignaro,
e ne ricevono la pienezza coloro che sono a destra.

[7] *Odi di Salomone* 23,17-22, in Charlesworth 1977, 93-95.
[8] Cf. Sacchi 2019, 321-324.

6. Il seno della Vergine contenne,
   accolse il concepimento e generò.[9]
7. Madre divenne la vergine, per un grande [atto di] misericordia.
8. Fu in travaglio e generò un figlio, ma non sentì dolore,
   perché ciò non accadeva a caso.
9. Ella non volle levatrice
   perché lui [il Figlio] le dava vita.
10. Ella generò come un uomo, di volontà.
    E generò per rendere visibile
    e acquisì per la grande forza
11. e amò per la redenzione
    e custodì per la soavità
    e mostrò per la grandezza.
    Alleluja.[10]

Anche in questa ode è possibile osservare l'intreccio tra l'economia trinitaria e il mistero dell'incarnazione. Come nell'ode ventitreesima, sono menzionate le persone della Trinità, cui ora sono attribuite specifiche azioni, e nel seguito è descritta l'incarnazione del Verbo nel seno della Vergine, mentre nell'ode ventitreesima si era privilegiata la passione e resurrezione. Si ripete dunque la concatenazione tra mistero trinitario ed economia dell'incarnazione, tratto che indica lo stato avanzato di elaborazione triadologica sottesa ai testi.

Alcuni passaggi paiono a prima vista alquanto originali, in particolare l'immagine materna attribuita al Padre con i seni da cui fluisce il latte, che gli riconosce un chiaro tratto di femminilità.[11] In realtà un certo atteggiamento materno di Dio è già attestato nell'insegnamento biblico, ad esempio nel profeta Isaia (cf. Is 66,12-13). Quanto all'immagine del latte come nutrimento da questi offerto, è attestata anche in due autori di poco successivi alle *Odi*: Clemente di Alessandria e Ireneo di Lione. Il primo presenta il Logos come latte donato dal Padre in

[9] Su questo passo, citato da Lattanzio, si veda in particolare Casadei 2010.

[10] *Odi di Salomone* 19,1-11, in Charlesworth 1977, 81-83.

[11] Ricordo che nella lingua siriaca, nella fase più antica della letteratura, lo Spirito santo è di genere femminile. Su questo si veda in particolare Harvey 1993.

due passi che mostrano particolare consonanza con le *Odi*.[12] Nel primo leggiamo:

> Mirabile mistero! Uno è il Padre di tutti; uno è anche il Logos di tutti; e uno è lo Spirito santo, lo stesso ovunque! Una e unica è la madre vergine. Io amo chiamarla "chiesa". Solo questa madre fu senza latte, perché solamente lei non fu donna. È vergine e insieme madre: inviolata come vergine, amorevole come madre. Essa, chiamando a sé i suoi figli, li nutre con il santo latte, il latte dei neonati.[13]

Nel secondo, oltre che del «latte del Logos», l'autore parla di "coppa" e di "seni del Padre". Dice infatti: «È ai piccoli che cercano il Logos che i seni della filantropia del Padre forniscono il latte.»[14] Analogamente, Ireneo impiega la metafora dei seni quando dice:

> Come a degli infanti, lui [il Cristo], che era il pane perfetto del Padre, diede a noi se stesso come latte – mi riferisco alla sua venuta come uomo – perché nutriti per così dire ai seni della sua carne e abituati da un tale allattamento a mangiare e bere il Verbo di Dio, potessimo accogliere in noi stessi anche colui che è il pane dell'immortalità, cioè lo Spirito del Padre.[15]

Notiamo in questi testi l'impiego della metafora del latte applicata al Figlio, di cui il Padre fa dono. Questi svolge dunque la funzione di nutrice, come è ribadito in altri passi delle *Odi*,[16] dove torna l'immagine dei seni del Padre. Il tema del Dio nutrice è anche presente nella tradizione siriaca successiva, da Efrem il Siro[17] fino a Giovanni di Dalyata, che in una preghiera contenuta nelle sue

[12] Cf. Clemente di Alessandria, *Il pedagogo* I,6,34-51, in Marrou – Harl 1960, 172-203; Clemente di Alessandria, *Inno* 42-46, in Mondésert – Matray –Marrou 1970, 198-201.

[13] Clemente di Alessandria, *Il pedagogo* I,6,42,1, in Marrou – Harl 1960, 186-187.

[14] Clemente di Alessandria, *Il pedagogo* I,6,46,1; in ivi, 192-195.

[15] Ireneo di Lione, *Contro le eresie* IV,38,1, in Rousseau 1965, 946-949.

[16] Cf. *Odi di Salomone* 8,14; 14,2, in Charlesworth 1977, 40-42 e 65-66.

[17] Cf. Efrem il Siro, *Inni sulla chiesa* 25,18; in Beck 1960, 57.

Lettere si rivolge a Dio con queste parole: «Quanti sono nati dal tuo Spirito succhiano la vita dal tuo petto, nel mondo senza fine.»[18]

L'immagine del latte, che ritorna anche nell'ode trentacinquesima,[19] soprattutto quando è connessa a quella del miele come nel caso dell'ode quarta,[20] induce a pensare al contesto liturgico, cui, come si diceva, le *Odi* erano probabilmente destinate, in particolare alle liturgie eucaristica e battesimale. Il latte, unito al miele, è infatti già nell'AT un simbolo pasquale, poiché rimanda alla terra promessa (cf. Es 3,8.17; 13,5; 33,3). Tale simbologia si integra dunque opportunamente nella liturgia battesimale, che nella chiesa antica era inserita alla celebrazione pasquale. Per la simbologia eucaristica, invece, vi è l'immagine della coppa, riferita al Figlio. L'*Epistola di Barnaba*, altro testo dei primordi della letteratura cristiana, associa l'assunzione del corpo e sangue di Cristo nell'eucaristia con l'allattamento del bambino da parte della madre.[21] Il latte e il miele sono infine posti in relazione all'eucaristia e al battesimo in un passo della *Tradizione apostolica*, dove si attesta che al neobattezzato, insieme al pane e al vino, veniva offerta una coppa di latte e miele mescolati «per [indicare] l'adempimento della promessa fatta i padri, che chiamò 'terra dove scorre latte e miele', nella quale anche Cristo ha dato la sua carne, della quale si nutrono, alla maniera dei bambini, i credenti.»[22] La medesima tradizione, oltre che in Clemente di Alessandria, si ritrova in Tertulliano, che ne attesta l'uso nell'Africa degli inizi del III secolo,[23] mentre a Roma essa è ancora attestata nel VI secolo.[24]

[18] Giovanni di Dalyata, *Lettere* 51,11, in Beaulay 1978, 478-479. Sull'argomento si veda Khayyat 2015.

[19] Cf. *Odi di Salomone* 35,5, in Charlesworth 1977, 124.

[20] Cf. *Odi di Salomone* 4,10, in ivi, 21-22.

[21] Cf. *Epistola di Barnaba* 6,8-19, in Prigent – Kraft 1971, 120-129.

[22] *Tradizione apostolica* 21, in Botte 1969, 92-93.

[23] Cf. Tertulliano, *Contro Marcione* 1,14,3, in Braun 1990, 164-165.

[24] Per una sintesi sul tema, si veda Di Berardino 2007.

2. Il Figlio e lo Spirito santo

Lungo le *Odi* è possibile rilevare vari altri riferimenti al Figlio e allo Spirito, dai quali è possibile cogliere ulteriori tratti dell'orizzonte trinitario dell'autore. Tali occorrenze, soprattutto quelle cristologiche, sono state ripetutamente investigate, il più delle volte al fine di misurarne l'ortodossia,[25] giungendo a posizioni che si dispiegano su un'ampia gamma che dice quanto tale genere di valutazione sia impraticabile oltre che inopportuna. Si va infatti da chi nelle *Odi* scorge tracce di una cristologia bassa, in cui cioè si privilegerebbe l'elemento umano del Cristo a discapito di quello divino, a sospetti di monofisismo e di docetismo.

In realtà, fatta salva l'umanità di Gesù, la persona del Figlio è chiaramente considerata al pari di quella del Padre, ad esempio laddove si afferma: «Si è manifestato Figlio del Padre – nella perfezione del Padre suo.»[26] Ed è riconosciuto Signore: «Ho creduto nel Cristo del Signore (*marya*) – e mi è apparso che lui è il Signore (*marya*).»[27]

In almeno due occasioni l'autore delle *Odi* sottolinea la particolarità del Figlio rispetto al comune genere umano, come nel caso in cui egli stesso di sé dice: «Provengo da un'altra stirpe»,[28] senza mancare tuttavia di ribadire subito dopo la sua piena solidarietà con l'umanità. In un altro passo, riferendosi alle sue sofferenze e a quanti avevano cercato di ucciderlo, il Figlio dice:

17. Non perii perché non ero loro fratello
né la mia nascita fu come la loro.
18. Cercarono la mia morte, ma non riuscirono
perché ero più vecchio della loro memoria.[29]

[25] Per i riferimenti bibliografici, rimando alla nota n. 5.
[26] *Odi di Salomone* 41,13, in Charlesworth 1977, 140-141.
[27] *Odi di Salomone* 29,6, in ivi, 111-112.
[28] *Odi di Salomone* 41,8, in ivi, 140-141.
[29] *Odi di Salomone* 28,17-18, in ivi, 108-109.

Il Figlio si attribuisce inoltre funzioni salvifiche, di iniziazione alla verità e di giudizio. Alludendo alla sua vicenda terrena, dice:

8. Io entrerò tra voi
   vi farò uscire dalla distruzione
   vi renderò edotti nelle vie della verità
…
11. Per mezzo mio sarete redenti e sarete beati
    il vostro giudice sono io.[30]

Con la sua vita egli ha tracciato un cammino le cui orme non possono essere cancellate[31] e dunque restano per chiunque un sentiero da seguire. Egli è anche specchio in cui l'essere umano può rimirarsi così da purificarsi dallo sporco che imbratta il suo volto:

1. Il Signore è il nostro specchio
   aprite gli occhi e guardatevi in lui!
2. Imparate a conoscere il vostro volto
   …
3. Tergete lo sporco dal vostro volto![32]

tema che sarà più tardi ripreso da Efrem, il quale lo applicherà al vangelo.[33]

Nell'ode terza, in un testo di grande intensità in cui è impiegato a profusione il linguaggio dell'amore tra Dio e la creatura, è svelato il fine del cammino di fede: diventare il figlio nel Figlio. Dice il testo:

7. Mi sono congiunto perché l'amante trovasse l'amato
   per amare quel Figlio, perché io divenga Figlio.
8. Chi è unito a colui che non muore
   sarà anche lui immortale.[34]

[30] *Odi di Salomone* 33,8-11, in ivi, 120-121.
[31] Cf. *Odi di Salomone* 39,9-13, in ivi, 135-136.
[32] *Odi di Salomone* 13,1-3, in ivi, 21-22.
[33] Cf. Brock 1976.
[34] *Odi di Salomone* 3,7-8, in Charlesworth 1977, 18-19.

Tuttavia il tema cristologico su cui l'autore torna più frequentemente è quello della discesa agli inferi, che nella tradizione siriaca ha riscosso grande successo.[35] Ad esso il nostro autore dedica ampi brani delle odi diciassettesima, ventiduesima e quarantaduesima, dove il Figlio è presentato nella veste di liberatore dell'intera umanità, da Adamo fino all'ultimo essere umano.

Alla figura dello Spirito santo, particolarmente presente nelle *Odi*,[36] sono associate immagini che resteranno celebri nella tradizione siriaca, in particolare quella della cetra. Ad esempio nell'ode quattordicesima:

6. La tua mitezza, Signore, dimori presso di me
   e i frutti del tuo amore.
7. Insegnami i canti della tua verità
   perché in te io porti frutti.
8. Apri per me la cetra del tuo Santo spirito
   perché in ogni melodia glorifichi te, Signore (14,6-8).[37]

Nell'ode sedicesima l'orante attribuisce allo Spirito la lode con cui glorifica il Signore e canta le bellezze della creazione:

5. Aprirò la mia bocca
   e in me il suo Spirito narrerà
   la gloria del Signore e il suo splendore
6. opera delle sue mani
   e lavoro delle sue dita.[38]

Lo Spirito ispira la lode e la conoscenza nell'intimo dell'essere umano, come leggiamo all'inizio dell'ode sesta, dove l'autore ricorre ancora all'immagine della cetra:

[35] Cf. Gounelle 2000.
[36] Cf. Cerbelaud 1994; Myers 2010.
[37] *Odi di Salomone* 14,6-8, in Charlesworth 1977, 65-66.
[38] *Odi di Salomone* 16,5-6, in ivi, 70-71.

1. Come il vento (*ruha*) scorre sulla cetra
   e le corde parlano.
2. così parla nelle mie membra lo Spirito (*ruha*) del Signore
   e io parlo nel suo amore.[39]

È lo Spirito che ispira la lode in colui che prega, come anche la conoscenza, poiché è lui che «istruisce i figli dell'uomo, affinché conoscano le vie» del Signore.[40] Tale conoscenza è effetto di una circoncisione spirituale, come canta l'ode undicesima:

2. L'Altissimo mi ha circonciso con il suo Spirito santo
   e ha svelato davanti a me i miei reni
   e mi ha riempito del suo amore.
3. La sua circoncisione è stata per me salvezza
   ho corso per la via, nella sua pace
   per la via della verità.[41]

Infine, lo Spirito protegge il cuore dell'orante, come le colombe fanno con i loro piccoli: «Come le ali delle colombe sui loro piccoli – e le bocche dei loro piccoli verso le loro bocche – così sono le ali dello Spirito sul mio cuore.»[42] Lo Spirito riveste l'essere umano della sua veste,[43] altro tema che nella letteratura cristiana è connesso al contesto battesimale. Lo Spirito dà quiete ed eleva, come canta ancora l'ode trentaseiesima: «Ho trovato riposo sullo Spirito del Signore – ed egli mi ha innalzato presso il Signore.»[44] Qui l'orante è rappresentato nell'atto di adagiarsi sullo Spirito, che lo eleva presso Dio, nella lode e nella conoscenza.[45]

[39] *Odi di Salomone* 6,1-2, in ivi, 28-29.
[40] *Odi di Salomone* 3,10, in ivi, 19.
[41] *Odi di Salomone* 11,2-3, in ivi, 49-52.
[42] *Odi di Salomone* 28,1, in ivi, 107-108.
[43] Cf. *Odi di Salomone* 25,8, in ivi, 101-102.
[44] *Odi di Salomone* 36,1, in ivi, 126.
[45] Cf. *Odi di Salomone* 36,2, in ivi, 126-127.

3. Una considerazione conclusiva

Al termine di questo excursus si resta confermati nell'idea che qualsiasi tentativo di definizione esatta della triadologia e della cristologia delle *Odi di Salomone*, soprattutto se confrontate con la teologia successiva, resti un'operazione quanto mai discutibile. Dai passi analizzati risulta la ricchezza di questa antichissima comprensione del mistero trinitario, la varietà delle sue rappresentazioni e soprattutto il suo carattere mistico, al di là di ogni comprensione, che l'autore delle *Odi* esprime in forma dossologica.

Trattandosi di una teologia per immagini ed espressa in forma innologica, per un uso probabilmente liturgico, non è facile dedurre idee chiare e distinte circa il pensiero dell'autore. Di qui la varietà delle interpretazioni proposte dagli studiosi, che non di rado mostrano il difetto, storicamente oltre che teologicamente pregiudizievole, di voler giudicare la triadologia delle *Odi*, e dunque la sua "ortodossia", confrontandola con le definizioni dogmatiche precisatesi nei concili dei secoli successivi. Queste composizioni sono state così tacciate di quasi tutte le eresie note.

Credo sia possibile applicare all'intera comprensione trinitaria delle *Odi*, quello che Brian McNeil afferma della loro cristologia:

> Non è possibile sistematizzare la cristologia delle Odi, né nel senso di una qualche "ortodossia", né nel senso di una qualche "eresia". Le apparenti contraddizioni ci invitano a riflettere e a discernere la verità. È possibile che il poeta voglia, attraverso queste affermazioni contraddittorie, proteggere il mistero della persona del Salvatore: l'intelligenza umana non riuscirà a squarciare il velo del Tempio.[46]

Il genio dell'opera sta proprio nella forma letteraria scelta: una teologia per immagini, poetica e dossologica, molto probabilmente destinata a uso liturgico, ritenuta particolarmente capace di esprimere ciò che può essere solo intuito. Quello, dunque, che potrebbe sembrare un limite si rivela essere uno dei pregi delle *Odi*.

[46] McNeil 1978b, 201.

Esse ricordano come l'insondabile mistero trinitario sia accessibile alla via poetica e dossologica più che al rigore concettuale. Di tale intuizione la tradizione siriaca è un ottimo testimone, avendo fatto del genere poetico una delle forme letterarie più praticate, come mostra Efrem il Siro, insigne teologo-poeta. La triadologia arcaica attestata nelle *Odi*, certamente più vicina all'insegnamento scritturistico di tante speculazioni successive, può risultare deludente per chi è in cerca di sistematicità chiara e univoca, ha tuttavia una sua coerenza con l'approccio teologico di chi ne fu autore, e al contempo indica al lettore una via capace dischiuderne, rispettosamente, i significati.

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A Syriac Protestant Malphono: Micah the Clockmaker of Mosul (19th century)[1]

EMILIANO FIORI

The paper presents a first overview of the 19th-century Syriac scholar Micah the Clockmaker. Born a Syriac Orthodox, Micah converted to Protestantism and composed many apologies for his faith. He authored some remarkable prose defenses written in Garshuni and various metrical apologies in Classical Syriac. The paper presents these works and discusses the manuscripts he composed to sketch a picture of such an active, yet overlooked, scholar. In so doing, it adds a new piece to the puzzle of the 19th-century history of Syriac scholarship.

Keywords: Micah the Clockmaker – Syriac poetry – Syriac Protestantism – Eduard Sachau – Protestant Missionaries in Iraq

> Micah, … one of the few names in Mosul that are, as we trust, written in the Lamb's book of life … is a stone-cutter by trade, but is a very intelligent man, possessing a clear understanding and a very vigorous mind, and is apparently a very humble, devoted Christian.[2]

With these few lines – slightly paternalistic yet sincerely admiring – Justin Perkins, the American missionary renowned in Urmia for

[1] Heartfelt thanks are due to Bishara Ebeid, who assisted me in understanding Micah's Garshuni text in MS Sachau 96, to Giovanni Gomiero for sharing with me important information regarding the Chaldean manuscripts preserved at the O.A.O.C. in Erbil-Ankawa, and to Sergy Minov for granting me access to his forthcoming resarch on Jeremiah Šamir.

[2] Perkins 1850, 56.

his work among the Assyrians,[3] introduced one of the most remarkable yet overlooked Syriac scholars and poets of the late nineteenth century. His name remains absent from the annals of Syriac literature and from scholarly discourse at large, aside from a few scattered references in the writings of Eduard Sachau, who personally met Micah (1816-after 1880) in Mosul. What makes Micah particularly striking is that, in the first half of the century, after encountering American Protestant missionaries in Mosul, where he lived, he abandoned his Syriac Orthodox faith and converted to Protestantism. He then became a fervent apologist for his new faith, opposing both Catholics and Miaphysites. However, his true uniqueness lies in the way he expressed his theological arguments: beyond composing brief Garshuni prose defenses, he crafted lengthy apologies for Protestantism in impeccable classical Syriac poetry. Due to space restraints, I cannot offer but minimal historical coordinates on American missions in Mosul or on the clash between Protestant and Catholic missions, nor on the involvement of the Syriac Orthodox and Chaldean Churches in these conflicts.[4] In what follows, then, I shall simply provide a bare introductory sketch of the material at our disposal, which allows us to reconstruct the main lines of his life and works, with the prospect of publishing his whole oeuvre as soon as possible.

This article stems from my previous research on Sachau,[5] which itself grew out of my years in Berlin – years in which I was discreetly guided by Riccardo Contini in my exploration of the city's tradition of Orientalist scholarship.[6] May this brief presentation, however modest a fruit of those discoveries, serve as a tribute to his unparalleled erudition and passion for the history of scholarship.

[3] On Perkins see below, n. 49.

[4] The reference studies on the historical context, particularly regarding the American missions in the Middle East, are Kawerau 1958 and Becker 2015.

[5] Fiori 2022.

[6] I am indebted to him for the reading of many erudite treasures, among which – suggested to me amidst the shelves of the Stabi West – the precious, if somewhat dated, Höpp – Mattes (eds.) 2002².

1 . The sources

The sources for both the biography and works of this intriguing figure can be categorized into four groups:

1. Works authored by Micah, preserved either in Berlin – where original manuscripts in his own handwriting survive – or in Mardin, where a copy exists that was not penned by him.
2. Manuscripts copied by Micah in his role as a scribe.
3. Eduard Sachau's catalog of Syriac manuscripts in Berlin, along with his travel notes.
4. References found in reports from American missionaries to Syria and Mesopotamia in the mid-19th century.

The exploration and uncovering of Micah's literary and scribal contributions must necessarily begin in Berlin, where his own writings – nearly all extant in unique, handwritten copies – are housed at the Staatsbibliothek. These include a lengthy sequence of 196 rhymed dodecasyllabic quatrains (following an AAAA rhyme scheme, in the form of *robāʿiyyāt*) composed in classical Syriac. This poetic work serves as a defense of the Protestant faith while attacking Catholicism and the Pope. Additionally, there are two prose texts written in Garshuni: the first is a brief collection of narratives (15 pages), in which Micah recounts key moments from his life, particularly the events leading up to and following his conversion, beginning in 1838. The second consists of a series of short polemical writings (22 pages) directed against both the Syriac Orthodox and Catholic clergy, focusing particularly on their perceived moral corruption.

1.1 Manuscripts bearing Micah's work

The manuscripts are:

- Sachau 96 (catalogue n. 332; Garshuni collection of stories on events surrounding his conversion, in nine chapters): 8 folios of

ruled paper (only 15 pages covered with writing), 22 lines per page, 16 x 10,5 cm.[7] The manuscript is undated, but Sachau speculates that it was written during his own stay in Mosul in the winter of 1880. In his catalog, Sachau provides a summary of its contents, but only a direct reading can truly capture Micah's humor and his personal perspective on his religious stance amid Mosul's various Christian denominations.

A significant portion of the text recounts the malicious accusations leveled against Micah by members of the Syriac Orthodox community, who insinuated that the clockmaker had converted to Protestantism out of greed for American money. To refute this claim, Micah shares a series of vivid and witty anecdotes, simultaneously constructing a defense of his own interpretation of Christianity. From these stories, we also learn that he was officially excommunicated – first by Behnam, the Syriac Orthodox bishop of Mosul, and later, at Behnam's request, by the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch himself.

One particularly notable passage (fol. 6r-v) features a dialogue between Micah and a Syriac Orthodox friend, who urges him to return to his former Church. Micah responds with a clever retort: since he possesses the clock of the Chaldean Patriarch, he could seek the latter's blessing upon returning it, as a way to compensate for his excommunication. His friend objects, pointing out that the Syriac Orthodox do not recognize the authority of the Chaldean Patriarch. Micah seizes on this argument to declare that, in fact, he recognizes the authority of neither, acknowledging only that of Jesus. In doing so, he explicitly frames his position as a "third way" between the established Churches of Mosul – one that, in his view, remains the only truly faithful path to Christ.

Elsewhere in the manuscript, Micah attributes the slander against him to one of his favorite themes: the inherent depravity of human nature. In the final chapter, however (fol. 7r-v), he offers a partially positive assessment of Bishop Behnam, describing him as a learned man, well versed in the Bible and Syriac literature. According to Micah, Behnam had wished to

[7] Sachau 1899, 902-903.

reform his Church but ultimately lacked the courage to challenge his community and enact meaningful change.

- Sachau 102 (catalogue n. 333; seven short treatises in Garshuni against other denominations and the corruption of the clergy): 12 folios of ruled paper (only 22 pages covered with writing), 24 lines per page, 18,5 x 11,7 cm.[8] The manuscript is not dated; Sachau assigns it to the beginning of the 1880s.

- Sachau 110 (catalogue n. 173); dodecasyllabic Syriac quatrains on the Protestant faith with an AAAA rhyme scheme, that is in the form of *robāʿiyyāt*; 23 folios of ruled paper (only 44 pages covered with writing), 19-21 lines per page, 18 x 11 cm.[9] The manuscript is undated. However, since the text references the year 1866, Sachau infers that it must have been written sometime afterward, likely around 1880. Its general intent is explicitly stated in the title (fol. 1v): «On the faith in our Lord, which was perverted into vain habits and rituals instead of the truth of the Gospel» (ܡܗܝܡܢܘܬ ܚܕ ܡܫܚܠܦ ܒܗܘܢ ܒܛܠܢ̈ܐ ܘܣܕܪ̈ܐ ܒܬܪ ܡܫܪܝܬܐ ܕܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ). This theme runs consistently throughout Micah's writings: he argues that the Syriac Churches have become fixated on external traditions while losing sight of true faith. Building on this premise, his quatrains address key aspects of Protestant polemic, particularly against Catholicism. Among his main arguments: other Christian confessions, especially Catholicism, exaggerate the role of priests as successors of the apostles, whereas in reality, they are greedy and corrupt; clerical marriage is not only legitimate but even advisable; the consecration of the Eucharistic species does not confer God's presence upon them; the veneration of relics is tantamount to idolatry; human nature is utterly depraved and justified by God's grace alone – rendering, among other things, the confession of sins to a priest entirely meaningless;[10] church buildings are not inherently sacred, as the

[8] Sachau 1899, 903-904.

[9] *Ibid.*, 548-549.

[10] See also Micah's account of his personal crisis in his letter to Laurie: «When I sought for justification through good works and religious observances, my conscience found no rest. I was directed to confess to the priest, and, like the rest, I did so; but it profited me nothing» (Laurie 1853, 409).

true temple of God is the human heart.[11] Every argument is abundantly supported with biblical proof. What is more interesting here is perhaps the general title of the quatrains (fol. 1v): «Poetics of Syriacness[12] and lamp of faith» (ܫܘܪܝܐܝܘܬܐ ܘܒܝܬ ܗܝܟܠ ܕܗܝܡܢܘܬܐ ܫܪܪܐ ܘܢܝܚܠܐ), which clearly illustrates how Micah viewed Christian Protestant instruction and the redefinition of Syriac identity as fundamentally interconnected – a theme that will become even more evident in our discussion of the next manuscript.

Indeed, alongside these Berlin manuscripts, all written in Micah's own hand, we must also consider an additional manuscript, which, unlike the others, was not copied by him:

- Mardin, Church of the Forty Martyrs (CFMM) 159, p. 134-193.[13] The manuscript, most probably datable to the late 19th century, contains 243 pages (20 x 14,5 cm). Despite being written in a fluent East Syriac script, it preserves four poems of Barhebraeus in dodecasyllabic quatrains with an AAAA rhyme scheme: *On perfection*,[14] *On the wondrous construction of the heavens*,[15] *On the soul*,[16] *On a saying of Socrates*,[17] and a selection of shorter poems. Following these texts, the manuscript includes Micah's work, concluding with the *Cave of Treasures* and a list (in Garshuni) of Barhebraeus' writings. Micah's work is simply titled: «Mimro

[11] A not-so-paradoxical revival of an old pseudo-Macarian motif – deeply rooted in Syriac ascetical literature – now reappearing in a Protestant guise. This is hardly surprising, given the appreciation of certain Protestant currents, particularly the Methodists, for Ps.-Macarius (see Fallica 2022).

[12] This term was not coined by Micah. As recorded in Payne Smith (1879–1901, 2586), Barhebraeus used it in his *Grammar* to denote the Syriac language and literature; the same meaning appears in the continuation of his *Ecclesiastical Chronicle* (II, 549). The term was widely adopted by Arameans in the 20th century and remains in common use today, as evidenced by concordances in the Simtho research engine. More broadly, Barhebraeus seems to have been a key linguistic and literary influence on Micah, particularly in his choice of the quatrain form (see below for the presence of Barhebraeus' poetry in MS CFMM 159).

[13] https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/503608. Metadata by James E. Walters.

[14] Dolabani 1929, 128-154.

[15] *Ibid.*, 86-94.

[16] *Ibid.*, 84-86

[17] *Ibid.*, 94-98.

that our pious brother of Mosul, Micah the clockmaker, composed in the year 1866 of our Lord against the traditions» (ܡܝܡܪܐ ܕܐܚܝܢ ܒܪ ܡܟܝ ܕܡܘܨܠ ܥܒܕ ܫܥܬܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܠܫܢܬ ܐܠܦ ܘܬܡܢܝ ܡܐܐ ܘܫܬܝܢ ܥܠ ܣܬܪ ܡܣܟܠܬܐ). This *Mimro* consists of a series of short paragraphs addressing various theological topics from a Protestant perspective, largely mirroring the themes explored in the quatrains of MS Sachau 110. As the title ("against the traditions") suggests, the text is primarily directed against the Catholic and Syriac Orthodox Churches. At the end of most paragraphs, Micah includes brief scriptural references to support his arguments. The first part of the treatise (up to p. 167), despite being formatted as prose, is actually composed in dodecasyllabic quatrains with an AAAA rhyme scheme – just like those found in Sachau 110 and on fol. 99v of Sachau 198 (see below). The subsequent pages transition into prose.

From the very outset, Micah positions himself as a teacher, directly addressing his audience: «My brothers, receive the word of truth with frankness, which was given by God through the apostles.»[18] Moreover, on the final page, the entire work is explicitly referred to as a "book of education", ܣܦܪܐ ܕܐܘܠܦܢܐ. What is particularly intriguing – indeed, unique – about this educational work is that Micah's Protestant poetic admonitions are placed alongside classical and authoritative Syriac literature (mostly poetry, notably in the same metrical form Micah himself uses), such as Barhebraeus' poems and the *Cave of Treasures*. Furthermore, in the general title of his writings, Micah is referred to as "our pious brother". This all suggests that Micah's *Mimro* serves as a lens through which we can view the manuscript as a product of the small Syriac Protestant community in Mosul,[19]

[18] ܐܡܪ ܠܗܘܢ ܐܚܝܢ ܒܪ ܡܟܝ ܕܡܘܨܠ ܥܒܕ ܫܥܬܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܠܫܢܬ ܐܠܦ ܘܬܡܢܝ ܡܐܐ ܘܫܬܝܢ ܥܠ ܣܬܪ ܡܣܟܠܬܐ ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗܘܢ ܒܚܪܝܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܬܝܗܒ ܒܝܕ ܫܠܝܚܐ ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗܘܢ ܒܚܪܝܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܬܝܗܒ ܒܝܕ ܫܠܝܚܐ

Note the rare Hebrew variant ܐܗܝܐ for God's name, which originates from the Peshitta's rendering of Exodus 3:14, where, however, in line with the Hebrew, it is written as ܐܗܝܐ. Micah uses the even rarer form (see Payne Smith 1879-1901, 46) ܐܗܝ to achieve a rhyme with ܡܫܝܚܐ.

[19] The fact that the manuscript is written in East Syriac script may suggest that this community of converts included not only Syriac Orthodox, but also Chaldeans. This is further supported by information on Micah's friend Jeremiah

which must have regarded Micah as a respected *malphono*. In fact, Micah's poem immediately follows a long sequence of Barhebraeus' works, clearly indicating that this community sought to reclaim their Syriac heritage and to highlight the ideal continuity between Barhebraeus – whom they saw as the last great teacher of the Syrians before Micah – and Micah himself. Through his poetry, Micah reconnects to this tradition, while also positioning his Protestant faith as its only true continuation: a Protestant renaissance is seen as the only possible renewal of authentic Syriac culture (Syriac-ness, ܣܘܪܝܝܘܬܐ, as Micah programmatically calls it in the title of his quatrains in Sachau 110), in opposition to the "traditions" that had stifled it.

Thus, although the group was short-lived and geographically limited, there seems to have been a genuine religious, cultural, and identity-driven program behind these converts, who viewed a Protestant vision of faith as the key to reconnecting with the profound essence of their Syriac identity – both ethnically and culturally. The inclusion of the *Cave of Treasures* in this collection may also be significant, as one of the main aims of the text is the "Syriacization" of salvation history.[20] Only such a deeply rooted connection between Protestantism and Syriac identity can explain the virulent reaction – though short-lived, yet fairly intense – of both the Syriac Orthodox and the Chaldeans against this Protestant movement in late 19th-century Iraq, as we will soon observe.

Regarding another of Micah's prose writings in Arabic, titled *Iʿtirāḍāt ʿala al-kanīsa al-rūmāniyya min ǧihat al-istiḥāla* (Objections against the Roman Church concerning the doctrine of transubstantiation), I was unable to locate any surviving manuscript. According to Graf, this work was printed in 1859 at the American Mission Press in Beirut.[21]

Šamir, as provided by American missionaries, who reported that he had been a Chaldean monk at Rabban Hormizd before converting to Protestantism.

[20] A seminal treatment of this topic can be found in Minov 2021, particularly 253-309, where he frequently uses the term "Syrianness" in quotation marks.

[21] Graf 1951, 285.

1.2 A manuscript copied by Micah in his role as a scribe

Micah is also known to be connected to two significant theological manuscripts. Harvard Syr. 11, which I have not yet had the opportunity to examine in person, contains a portion of a Protestant anti-Catholic treatise where Micah is mentioned as the translator.[22] Sachau 198 (catalogue n. 196),[23] which Micah is likely the scribe of, contains two works by Abū l-Maʿānī (d. 1480) – the Syriac Orthodox patriarch of Tur ʿAbdin and a prominent mystical writer who still awaits a comprehensive study –:[24] the visionary apocalyptic work *Sūllōqō hawnōnōyō*[25] ("The ascent of the mind", which shares the title with one of Barhebraeus' scientific works)[26] and a letter on the Eucharist.[27] The manuscript also contains various poems in Syriac and Garshuni, theological prose in Garshuni, questions and answers on biblical subjects, and three works by Barhebraeus: the second poem on divine wisdom,[28] the *Book of pupils*,[29] and the *Sermon on wisdom*.[30] Whereas Harvard Syr. 11 will be examined at a later time, Sachau 198 is of particular interest for several reasons. Firstly, it was copied in 1838, the same year that Micah's chronicle of the events leading to his conversion begins. Secondly, Micah may be the copyist of this manuscript. Sachau is rightly cautious about identifying Micah as the scribe: on fol. 99r, in the colophon that records the year 1838, the scribe refers to himself as "Michael" (ܡܝܟܐܝܠ). However, on fol. 60r, he

[22] I rely on the short note of Goshen-Gottstein 1979, 41, and on the slightly more detailed description of J. F. Coakley, at https://hollis.harvard.edu/discovery/fulldisplay?context=L&vid=01HVD_INST:HVD2&lang=en&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&docid=alma990093080320203941.

[23] Sachau 1899, 632-636.

[24] Most of his works, including the *Sūllōqō hawnōnōyō*, *The ascent of the mind*, are now published and translated by Bertozzi 2021.

[25] Edition and translation in Bertozzi 2021, 117-190.

[26] See Takahashi 2005, 384-387 for the bibliography.

[27] Edition and translation in Bertozzi 2021, 199-205.

[28] Dolabani 1929, 99-114.

[29] Takahashi 2005, 263.

[30] *Ibid.*, 259.

names himself "Micah"[31] and on fol. 99v there is a quatrain with AAAA rhyme scheme in dodecasyllabic meter, handwritten in pencil.[32] In these verses, the scribe refers to himself once again as "Michael," stating that he went to a friend's house to enjoy his conversation. One might suspect, however, that in this case, the form "Michael" is used to fit the meter. Additionally, on the same page, there is a note in Arabic script, written in pencil by "Mīkā Yūnān the clockmaker", which seems to reiterate in prose what the quatrain had poetically conveyed. The note states: «Mīkā Yūnān the clockmaker visited Šammās Jeremiah in his house but did not find him at home: may God protect this house» (ميكا يونان الساعاتي زار ش ارميا في بيته وما راه في البيت ستر الله هذا البيت). This note refers to the house of Jeremiah Šamir, another convert to Protestantism, who, along with Micah, is mentioned by Sachau in his travelogue, which I will address shortly. These details increase the likelihood that Micah was indeed the actual copyist. Furthermore, the script in Sachau 198 bears a high degree of similarity to Micah's handwriting in MSS Sachau 96, 102, and 110. While it may appear slightly different from the other three manuscripts, it is important to remember that Sachau 96, 102, and 110 were written over forty years after Sachau 198, and Micah's handwriting may have evolved during that time.

The manuscript would thus reflect Micah's intellectual engagement with and commitment to the religious tradition of his early years. It contains important works by key Syriac Orthodox

[31] In a dodecasyllabic verse where he conceals the letters of his name in the form of numbers, as previously noted by Sachau 1899, 635:

ܟܐܚܝܡ ܒܚܒܐ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܝ ܡܚܬܐ ܒܒܝܬܟ ܘܐܦܠܓ ܒܣܝܡܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܐ ܡܫܟܚ ܒܗ ܫܡܗ

"In forty and ten and twenty and one he restrained and contracted his name". 40/10/20/1 = ܟܚܡ.

[32] ܡܛܠ ܚܒܐ ܕܐܬܝ ܠܝ ܠܒܝܬܟ ܘܠܡܚܙܝܟ
ܠܡܬܥܢܓ ܒܫܝܪ ܡܠܝܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ
ܘܐܦ ܕܥܣܩܐ ܐܚܕ ܠܟ ܠܡܣܕܪ ܟܠ ܥܒܕܝܟ
ܬܬܩܝܡ ܒܫܠܡܐ ܕܡܪܟ ܡܝܟܐܝܠ ܚܕ ܡܢ ܚܒܪܝܟ

It was love that urged me to come to your house and visit you
To enjoy a little bit of your conversation
And even though business took you away to settle all your affairs,
May you remain in the peace (provided) by Michael, one of your companions. (MS Sachau 198, fol. 99v)

authors of the late Middle Ages and, through its numerous poems, also illustrates Micah's particular literary tastes.

It should be noted that MS London, British Library Or. 9326, fol. 61r–64r, contains several anecdotes by Jeremiah Šamir translated into Syriac by a certain Michael who—given the aforementioned link between Jeremiah and Micah-Michael—may indeed be Micah the clockmaker. Another manuscript certainly written by Micah is Harvard Syr. 8, which contains Matthew 5–6 translated into the Jewish dialect of Zakho and transcribed by him.[33]

1.3 Eduard Sachau's catalog of Syriac manuscripts in Berlin

As mentioned above, Sachau himself mentions Micah in a passage of his travelogue about the trip he undertook to Syria and Mesopotamia in 1879-1880 on behalf of Kaiser Wilhelm II, which he published in 1883.[34] Sachau writes that he met Micah in Mosul together with the above-mentioned Jeremiah Šamir, who later became Sachau's provider of manuscripts, either as a mediator in purchasing or as a scribe, for Berlin's Royal Library, now in Berlin's Staatsbibliothek and in the British Library.[35] Since his encounter with contemporary Syriac culture was marked by frustrating experiences of what he describes as uncultivated monks and inaccessible libraries, Sachau betrays clear pleasure in meeting two learned men, one of whom (Micah) could speak, write and recite poems in classical Syriac:

> In Mosul, I met two men,[36] Micah and Jeremiah. The former (who has since passed away) was a clockmaker and a tinkerer. Moreover, he had a good knowledge of Syriac literature and was fluent in

[33] Goshen-Gottstein 1979, 40; a more detailed description by J. F. Coakley at https://hollis.harvard.edu/discovery/fulldisplay?context=L&vid=01HVD_INST:HVD2&lang=en&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&docid=alma990093067790203941.

[34] Sachau 1883, 355.

[35] Fiori 2022, 182-183 and 185-186.

[36] He mistakenly refers to them as Nestorians, misidentifying their original Christian denomination,

> speaking, writing, and reciting poetry in classical Syriac. He never missed an opportunity to sing verses in my presence. He and his family had converted to Protestantism.[37]

In his catalogue of the Syriac manuscripts, published sixteen years after his travelogue, Sachau refers to Micah as both an author and a scribe, as well as the target of polemical writings. He does so in his descriptions of the manuscripts discussed above in sections 1.1 and 1.2, as well as in one additional manuscript (Sachau 158), which we will examine later.

1.4 References found in reports from American missionaries to Syria and Mesopotamia in the mid-19th century

Although my research on this topic is still in its infancy, appreciative mentions of Micah can be found in reports by American missionaries. A crucial source is Thomas Laurie's book *Dr. Grant and the Mountain Nestorians*, published in 1853.[38] Thomas Laurie (1821–1897) arrived in Mosul from Boston in November 1842 and accompanied the physician and missionary Asahel Grant (1807–1844) on his missions to the East Syriac communities in the mountains of Northern Mesopotamia. Laurie remained based in Mosul until Grant's death there in 1844.[39] While his book primarily focuses on Grant's mission among the Assyrians of Northern Mesopotamia, Laurie also dedicates some space to encounters in more southern regions, including Mosul itself. It was in Mosul that Laurie met Micah, who was appointed as his Arabic teacher. Micah plays a significant role in the final pages of Laurie's book, where some of his letters to Laurie are reproduced.[40] Beyond Micah's compelling expressions of Protestant piety, the reader is struck by two key details: his birth year, 1816, and an event he regarded as his first moment of conversion – his survival of a plague that struck Mosul in 1828,

[37] Sachau 1883, 355.
[38] On Thomas Laurie, see e.g. Kawerau 1958, esp. 248-249.
[39] *Ibid.*, 254 and n. 487.
[40] Laurie 1853, 408-410.

killing his father (a millwright) and two brothers. At sixteen, having received no formal education («With the neglect of spiritual things so universal here, they taught me nothing except the way in which I was to earn my bread»),[41] Micah decided to teach himself to read Syriac. In 1842, as Laurie notes in another passage, Micah travelled to Mardin, apparently to study Syriac and Arabic. However, Laurie's wording is somewhat ambiguous: «Micha returned [*scil.* from Mardin] also, a more intelligent and valuable assistant ... Besides his more perfect knowledge of the Syriac, he had studied the Arabic also.»[42]

The other accounts of Micah that I have been able to track down so far are primarily found in two issues of the *Missionary Herald*, the general bulletin of the American missions. An issue from 1849 includes a letter dated July 28th from William R. Stocking (1810–1854), a teacher and one of the most prominent American missionaries in Urmia, where he was based from 1837 to 1853.[43] Stocking reports on the missions among the 'Nestorians', a broad label that seems to encompass the entire Syriac Christian world, as his letter also touches upon the Chaldeans and the Syriac Orthodox. Here, Micah (spelled "Meekah") is described as «one of the most useful and active leaders in the Protestant community» and «a young man of intelligence and piety.»[44] Stocking further informs us that, in addition to teaching Arabic («he was a teacher of Arabic to Mr. Laurie»),[45] Micah quickly learned English and spoke it proficiently. More notably, Stocking emphasizes Micah's «deep and consistent piety, based on profound views of man's natural depravity and the necessity of a thorough work of the Spirit to regenerate the soul.»[46] Strikingly, these distinctly Protestant spiritual themes are not merely generic attributes of Micah as a devoted Protestant; they also appear as recurring motifs in his

[41] *Ibid.*, 408.
[42] *Ibid.*, 214.
[43] See Kawerau 1958, esp. 234, 274; Becker 2015, esp. 157-159.
[44] Stocking 1849, 394.
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] *Ibid.*

poetry. Stocking also highlights Micah's dedication to spreading Protestant doctrine, both through distributing books and, more importantly, through personal conversations in the streets («particularly by personal conversation with inquirers after truth, he has contributed much to promote the present extended religious interest in Mosul»).[47] This aligns with Micah's own account in the Garshuni manuscript Sachau 96, where he underscores the importance of keeping his shop in Mosul's *suq* – not only as a means of livelihood but also as a way to engage with people and discuss the truths of the Protestant faith.[48] Yet despite his zeal, Stocking notes that Micah's efforts remained «almost solitary.»[49] In the following year, 1850, the *Missionary Herald* published excerpts from the journal of the renowned missionary Justin Perkins (1805–1869),[50] recounting his impressions of the visit to Mosul the previous year, which he had undertaken alongside Stocking.[51] Perkins notes that more than twenty Syriac Christians, mostly of Syriac Orthodox background, regularly gathered at Micah's house to hear him preach the Gospel.[52] This detail reinforces our impression – one evidently shared by Stocking in his 1849 account, where he called Micah a "leader" – that Micah was a prominent figure not only within Mosul's Protestant community but also among the city's Christians more broadly. In the following pages, Perkins also mentions deacon Jeremiah Šamir, whom I previously identified as Micah's friend. He highlights their close collaboration, stating that Jeremiah «associates fraternally with Micah in efforts to make known the Gospel.»[53] Perkins describes

[47] *Ibid.*

[48] Sachau 96, fol. 5v.

[49] *Ibid.*

[50] Perkins, one of the leading figures of the American mission in Urmia, is given prominent attention in Becker 2015, particularly in the first four chapters.

[51] Perkins 1850, 53-61. A year later, in 1851, Perkins published an extended version of his journal documenting the mission from Urmia to Mosul in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (Perkins 1851). However, in this account, he does not mention Micah nor make any remark on the religious life in the cities, focusing instead on geographical and archaeological observations.

[52] Perkins 1850, 56.

[53] *Ibid.*, 55.

Jeremiah as «an excellent scholar, in Arabic and Syriac»[54] and adds an important detail: he had formerly been a Chaldean monk at the monastery of Rabban Hormizd.[55] This supports the hypothesis outlined earlier (in 1.1) that Mosul's Protestant community was of diverse origins. One might even speculate that MS CFMM 159, written in an East Syriac hand, was copied by Jeremiah himself. Perhaps most strikingly, Perkins reports that Micah maintained the trust of Mor Behnam, Mosul's Syriac Orthodox bishop, even after his conversion to Protestantism. Behnam relied on Micah, the clockmaker, for assistance in preparing biblical references for his own sermons – an effort in which Micah used an «English concordance.»[56] We also learn that the two men were related by marriage, as Micah's wife was Behnam's niece. Perkins paints an ambiguous portrait of Behnam, describing him as «probably not a pious man, yet much enlightened.»[57] According to Perkins, the bishop was inclined toward reforming his church but was too lenient toward his own community. This judgment is echoed in Micah's own words in the Garshuni narratives of MS Sachau 96, particularly in chapter 10,[58] suggesting that Perkins' report may have been influenced by Micah's perspective.

2. Polemics surrounding Micah and beyond: A short note

Other sources related to Micah exist, though they do not provide further insights into his biography or writings. These were authored by Syriac opponents of Protestantism, each writing from a different perspective – two Chaldeans and another Syriac Orthodox.

The first source survives in a single copy, currently housed in Ankawa at the library of the O.A.O.C. (Antonian Order of Saint Hormizd of the Chaldeans). It was briefly described by Haddad

[54] *Ibid.*, 59.
[55] *Ibid.*, 55.
[56] Perkins 1850, 60.
[57] Perkins 1850, 59.
[58] See Sachau 96, fol. 7r-v.

and Isaac in their catalogue of the Patriarchal Chaldean Library of Baghdad under entry number 565 (now Erbil-Ankawa, O.A.O.C. Syr. 565), where the relevant text appears on fol. 119v–126v.[59] It is structured as an exchange of questions and answers between Micah and a Chaldean Priest, Peter of Karamlish. The text itself is said to have been authored by Jeremiah of Alqosh (also known as Eramya Maqdešaya):[60] «Beginning of the questions of Micah the clockmaker, the Protestant of Mosul, and the priest Peter of Karamlish, by our teacher *rabbā* Father Jeremiah, teacher of the great school … of the monastery of Rabban Hormizd … from the village called Alqosh» (ܫܪܝܬ ܫܐܠܬܐ ܕܡܝܟܐ ܣܥܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܠ ܦܪܘܬܐ ܘܕܩܫܝܫܐ ܦܛܪܘܣ ܕܩܪܡܠܝܫ ܒܝܕ ܪܒܢ ܝܪܡܝܐ ... ܕܒܝܬ ܡܘܢܐ ... ܕܥܠ ܐܠܩܘܫ ... ܕܡܢ ܟܦܪܐ ... ܕܩܪܝ ... ܕܡܪܒܢ ... ܕܒܝܬ ... ܕܡܪ ... ܕܡܪ ... ܕܡܪ ... ܕܡܪ ... ܕܡܪ ... ܕܡܪ ... ܕܡܪ ... ܕܡܪ ... ܕܡܪ ... ܕܡܪ ... ܕܡܪ ... ܕܡܪ ... ܕܡܪ ... ܕܡܪ ...). The five questions posed in the text are as follows:

> 1) «With the sign of the Cross, the Papists commemorate the hypostases of the Trinity. Does this cause suffering to the Trinity?» 2) «The Pope places the sign of the Cross on his shoes. Does the Pope thus despise the Cross?» 3) «The Papists use images. Have they thereby violated the First Commandment of God?» 4) «The Papists administer the Eucharist to the laity under the species of bread alone. Have they thus disregarded God's command, which ordains that it be received under both species of bread and wine?» 5) «The Papists call the Virgin Mary the Mother of God. Should one, then, fear the implication that she is also the mother of the Father and the Spirit?»[61]

The fifth question remains unanswered, probably because the copyist did not find it in his antigraph.

Jeremiah of Alqosh's brief work is just one episode in a broader Chaldean polemical tradition against Protestantism, which was primarily conducted in Arabic but occasionally written in Syriac. One of the most notable figures to engage in this debate in Syriac was the prolific Chaldean scholar and priest Samuel Jamil (1847–

[59] Haddad – Isaac 1988, 257.

[60] Indeed, he is most likely to be identified with Eramya Maqdešaya of Alqosh (1847–1929), who served as bishop of Zakho from 1892 under the name Timothaus Maqdisi (see https://bibale.irht.cnrs.fr/56042).

[61] MS Haddad – Isaac 565, fol. 120v-121r.

1917).[62] Only recently have Jamil's works and intellectual contributions – described with genuine admiration by Sachau in both his travelogue and his catalogue –[63] begun to receive the recognition they deserve. Thanks to the efforts of Samer S. Yohanna, who has overseen the reorganization of the Chaldean manuscript heritage in Iraq, along with European scholars collaborating on the digitization and re-cataloguing of the O.A.O.C. library, Jamil's scholarly legacy is increasingly emerging as that of a towering modern Syriac writer. Among his theological works, a particularly significant place is occupied by a lengthy polemical treatise in classical Syriac against Protestantism – though not specifically against Micah – entitled ܡܚܫܒܬܐ ܘܦܣܩܐ ܕܫܘܬܦܐ ܕܗܠܝܢ ("Refutation and Rejection of the Protestant Errors"). This work remains largely unexplored by modern scholarship and awaits further academic study.[64] Both Jeremiah of Alqosh and Samuel Jamil offer us a unique opportunity to hear a Catholic response in Syriac to the polemical voice of Syriac Protestantism. While the (re-)discovery of classical Syriac Protestant poetry was surprising – one might have assumed it to be an isolated case – Jeremiah's and Jamil's polemics reveal that the Catholic-Protestant debate, a major global issue during the height of European colonialism and forcefully expressed in the German Kulturkampf, was, for a brief period, also articulated in classical Syriac in the far East of the late Ottoman Empire.

However, the Protestant-Catholic debate was only one facet of the polemics sparked by the rise of Syriac Protestantism. Not only was the controversy surrounding Protestantism expressed in classical Syriac, as seen among the Chaldeans, but within Micah's Church of origin, classical poetry appears to have been a

[62] On Jamil see Kiraz 2011; Macuch 1976, 405-407; Abuna 496-498.

[63] Sachau 1883, 363; Sachau 1899, 353.

[64] It is preserved in three copies at the O.A.O.C library. The copies are catalogued by Haddad – Isaac 1988, 80 as numbers 164, 165, and 166. The first two copies are also listed by Vosté 1929, 36 under numbers 89 (= MS Haddad – Isaac 164) and 90 (= MS Haddad – Isaac 165); MS Haddad – Isaac 166 is not recorded in Vosté's catalogue. Their current call numbers are then Erbil-Ankawa, O.A.O.C. Syr. 164, 165, and 166.

particularly favoured medium for conveying these arguments. This was likely due to the literary form of Micah's Syriac writings, which prompted one of his adversaries to respond in kind – perhaps believing that part of Micah's influence stemmed from the persuasive power of his poetic style. Indeed, the second major anti-Protestant work directed against Micah comes from ʿAbd al-Waḥid, a Syriac Orthodox deacon and physician from Mosul, who composed an extensive series of poems targeting Micah, Jeremiah Šamir, and the American missionaries. He personally transcribed these poems in what is now MS Sachau 158 (catalogue no. 172), where they seemingly span an impressive 193 folia.[65] The manuscript is undated, but two of the poems are dated to 1849 and 1850, indicating that the volume must have been copied sometime after 1850.

3. Provisional conclusions

The essential information we can gather from these sources is that Micah himself provides his birth date as 1816, but his date of death remains unknown. His first documented appearance in history is in 1838, likely as the scribe of MS Sachau 198, while his last traceable mention falls between 1880 and 1883 – the year of publication of Sachau's *Reise*, by which time he was certainly deceased. In 1866, he composed the work preserved in MS CFMM 159. Regarding his profession, he was alternately described as a stonecutter, particularly by Perkins in his report for the *Missionary Herald* and by Laurie in the index of his book on Asahel Grant, where he refers to him as *al-naqqār* ("the stonecutter"). This occupation appears to have either evolved into or been supplemented by clockmaking, as Sachau consistently identifies him as a clockmaker, both in his travelogue and in his catalogue. MS CFMM 159 also designates him as a clockmaker (ܥܒܕ ܣܥܬ) in its title, and the same designation appears alongside his name in Jeremiah of Alqosh's questions and answers. Furthermore, in MS Sachau 96, Micah states that at a certain point, he possessed the

[65] Sachau 1899, 546-548.

Chaldean patriarch's clock, which he was either constructing or repairing.[66] Within the small Protestant convert community of Mosul, Micah was regarded as an authoritative teacher – a leader, as the Americans called him. Judging by his prolific poetic output, his taste for subtle wordplay (as seen, for instance, in his 'numerological' disguise in MS Sachau 198, fol. 60r), and the sharp dialectical skill evident in his Garshuni prose, he must have been an exceptional intellectual figure, one that deserves to be fully explored.

Micah's keen intelligence and polemical vigor clearly provoked significant concern among both the Chaldeans – whom he targeted as the "Papists" in his polemics – and the Syriac Orthodox – whom he had abandoned. This is evident in the considerable intellectual effort they devoted to refuting him and Protestantism more broadly. Thus, this humble craftsman, yet remarkably gifted writer, emerges as a pivotal figure embodying a distinct, albeit temporally and geographically limited, cultural phase of Middle Eastern Christianity. His life and work provide an exemplary case of microhistory, one of great significance to historians of Christianity as a whole.

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[66] MS Sachau 96, fol. 6r-v.

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Il termine leššana *in Efrem di Nisibi. Appunti di lettura*

EMIDIO VERGANI

This paper proposes an overview of the various uses that the poet and theologian Ephrem of Nisibis (d. 373) made of the Syriac word *leššana*. Alongside its primary meaning of "tongue", Ephrem expands the semantic field of the word to serve metaphorical and rhetorical purposes within many of his famous *Hymns*.

Keywords: Ephrem of Nisibis – Syriac poetry – *leššana* – language – hymnography

Oggi la figura di Efrem di Nisibi (306 circa – 373) attrae sempre più l'attenzione e l'interesse degli studiosi.[1] Una conseguenza dell'intenso lavorio in corso è che l'accostamento al ricco e ampio lascito letterario efremiano avviene con approcci molteplici e differenti. Per stare ad ambiti prossimi in qualche modo alle ricerche linguistiche o, comunque, agli studi interessati in generale alla "lingua", al "linguaggio", ai vari tipi di linguaggi, va segnalato che gli studiosi di Efrem si sono di recente soffermati sul tema del suo linguaggio filosofico,[2] o, quanto meno, dato il genere teologico-poetico della produzione efremiana, hanno approfondito il carattere simbolico della sua espressione poetica.[3]

[1] Come introduzioni all'opera di Efrem valgano sempre: de Halleux 1983; Brock 1999; den Biesen 2006.

[2] Bundy 1982; 1986; Koonammakkal 2017; 2020.

[3] Botha 1992; Koonammakkal 1993; den Biesen 2021.

Senza pensare di approfondire in questa sede il testo efremiano in direzioni impegnative come quelle evocate, mi propongo, più semplicemente, di compiere un'indagine sul termine *leššana* («lingua») in Efrem. Punto di partenza saranno i testi più autentici di Efrem, secondo una *communis opinio* accreditata, tenendo fondamentalmente conto dell'edizione critica approntata dal benedettino Edmund Beck (1902-1991), in lunghi anni di fedeltà all'impresa.[4] Non trascurerò tuttavia, almeno nelle conclusioni, di gettare uno sguardo anche in un'opera la cui attribuzione è stata discussa (a partire dallo stesso Beck 1983), il *Commentario al Diatessaron*,[5] poiché resta un testo che può fornire sempre utili dati sulla più antica eredità efremiana, se non direttamente su di lui.

Date le differenti accezioni che i vocabolari segnalano per il termine preso in considerazione, intendo compiere il tentativo di farne emergere il senso, quanto meno i significati notevoli, attraverso la lettura e l'interpretazione dei luoghi in cui *leššana* compare. In realtà, in questo modo, emergerà piuttosto il pensiero di Efrem, ma in definitiva sarà possibile cogliere anche le risonanze e analogie connesse all'area semantica che il termine occupa e circoscrive in siriaco. Le attestazioni nell'opera efremiana sono numerose e pertanto, sebbene con qualche arbitrio, l'indagine su un gran numero di esse, pur senza preoccupazioni di esaustività quanto all'intero *corpus*, può offrire un quadro plausibile degli "usi", delle accezioni, delle valenze semantiche, che *leššana* assume in Efrem. E tutto ciò mi auguro possa essere benevolmente gradito da chi ha esercitato per tanti anni, con raffinata perizia, la linguistica semitica.[6]

Prima di iniziare la rassegna, è utile sfogliare i dizionari, coi richiami alle radici, agli esempi, all'ordine di importanza delle aree semantiche e metaforiche. Due dizionari standard e ancora di uso frequente, nonostante la molteplicità anche di strumenti

[4] Segnalerò, alla prima citazione, i testi utilizzati dell'edizione di Beck (CSCO, Louvain, 1955-1979).

[5] Leloir 1963; 1966; 1990.

[6] Con rimarchevole attenzione alla tradizione e alla lingua delle Chiese sire; basti, per questo, Contini 2005.

digitali oggi a disposizione, J. Payne Smith (Mrs. Margoliouth, 1903) e L. Costaz (1963), assegnano al termine i seguenti significati; il primo: a) «the tongue»; b) «speech, language, pronunciation»; c) «a people, nation»; d) «metaph. a stretch of the sea, of a river, a tongue or spit of land»;[7] e) «names of plants»;[8] il secondo: «langue, langage» (do solo la traduzione francese) e «ivraie» per l'uso botanico.[9] In latino J. Brun dà *lingua*, *dialectus*, *sermo*, trop. *lingua terrae*; *lingua agni*, *plantago*,[10] mentre il *Thesaurus* (R. Payne Smith 1901, II) ha una voce compatta e ricca, riassunta nel *Dictionary* di Mrs. Margoliouth (riportato sopra): *lingua* hominum 1) lingua *ut instrumentum sermonis et ipse* sermo, *pronuntiatio*; 2) *lingua*, *sermo cujusvis gentis propius*; 3) *gens*, *natio eandem linguam loquens*; 4) metaph. *id quod formam linguae refert*.[11] Più recentemente, riordinano e sintetizzano il quadro presentato i dizionari di M. Sokoloff (2009) e di S.P. Brock e G.A. Kiraz (2020); il primo: 1) «tongue»; 2) «language», «judgment, pronunciation, nation»; 3) «a spit of land, bay of the sea», «ornament»; 4) «plantain, darnel, cockle, bird'stongue, borage»;[12] il secondo: «tongue; speech, language, pronunciation».[13]

1. La lingua medium *di gloria e di rovina*

Il senso che Efrem associa al termine "lingua" si rivela in tutta la sua ricchezza in una breve espressione che si riscontra negli *Inni sulla Chiesa*. Nella strofa in questione, *leššana* è inteso in primo luogo come organo del corpo, in quanto tale opera creata da Dio.

[7] Ne sono esempio in Efrem le «lingue di fuoco» inviate in seguito all'Ascensione, cf. *Inni sulla Natività* 25,15, ed. Beck 1959, 132. Cf. inoltre, *infra*, n. 49.

[8] Payne Smith (Mrs. Margoliouth) 1903, 245.

[9] Costaz 1963, 174.

[10] Brun 1911, 278.

[11] Payne Smith 1901, II: 1973-1974.

[12] Sokoloff 2009, 698.

[13] Brock – Kiraz 2020, 142.

Efrem ne accetta subito la funzione comunicativa, un *medium*[14] dunque, un'estensione delle facoltà umane, che permette di allargare gli orizzonti, stabilire delle relazioni, e, in specie, per il teologo-poeta di Nisibi, quella tra l'uomo e Dio. In tale impianto concettuale, si può notare come la condizione umana sia intesa indubbiamente con una prioritaria finalità "religiosa": la lingua è fatta per glorificare Dio, sebbene essa sia stata creata prima che iniziasse a lodare il suo Creatore. Da questi cenni, forse eccedendo la reale portata dei versi che citerò, mi pare giusto dedurre che essi implicano l'idea di una radicale secolarità della creazione, della "lingua", dunque, come di ogni altro bene creato; e che vi è parimenti riconosciuta la dimensione in ultimo spirituale di tutto quanto sia venuto all'esistenza:

> Gesù è il braccio di suo Padre,
> attraverso cui Egli forma, crea e fissa (il creato).
> Nulla gli offrirono i sensi (umani),
> o le membra finché non fossero (creati).
> Formò la bocca (ancor) prima che pregasse,
> la lingua (*leššana*) prima che lodasse;
> Formò le ginocchia, quando non si genuflettevano (in preghiera),
> né (l')adoravano.
> Formò le mani, quando ancora
> non si stendevano a dar lode.
> A te, Buono, e (a te) Figlio del Buono,
> la gloria da (tutto) il cosmo (che tu hai creato)![15]

Efrem crea con questi versi la figurazione di un mondo libero, donato all'uomo senza alcun vincolo, in totale gratuità. In esso, la lingua, o il linguaggio, la sua effettiva articolazione in discorso, è uno strumento tra gli altri che l'uomo scopre di possedere e di potersene servire. Con un salto logico forse, o con un paradosso, si scopre così che, al dono gratuito della creazione, deve corrispondere da parte dell'uomo, liberamente, la lode per il Creatore. Essa, invero, si può esprimere pure nel «silenzio

[14] Cf. il termine, senza alcuna pretesa di applicarne appieno analisi e categorie, in McLuhan 1964, 55, 85.

[15] *Inni sulla Chiesa* 22,4, ed. Beck 1960, 48; trad. it. Vergani 2017, 21.

(*šetqa*)», che Dio, abbinandolo alla lingua nelle sue strategie per incontrare l'uomo, ha posto attorno a quest'ultima,[16] prima ancora che fosse abituata all'ascolto.[17] In testi come questi, il termine *leššana* è in primo luogo l'organo,[18] ma, nello stesso tempo, richiama metonimicamente, o comunque in vario modo, le molteplici funzioni che esso è in grado di assolvere, in specie quelle capacità linguistiche e comunicative, che ricongiungono in un solo afflato colloquio quotidiano e lode.

Tutto il creato è chiamato alla lode, le creature "mute" non meno di quelle "fornite di parola". Nell'*Inno sulla Chiesa* 42, che rievoca l'episodio della tempesta sedata (Mt 8,23-27), il mare spaventa i discepoli sulla barca ma eleva, con l'arpa delle sue onde e del vento, le lodi al Creatore. Quando poi il Signore impose alla natura il silenzio, toccò per Efrem alla bocca elevare la lode di gloria e così «restituì la lingua (*leššana*) / il debito (di ringraziamento) dei sensi».[19] In ogni caso, pur finalizzata a render gloria al Creatore, la «lingua» è un *medium* a disposizione degli individui e riveste quelle parti che gli uomini, nella loro libertà, le assegnano. I figli di Zebedeo hanno presentato la loro temeraria richiesta (Mc 10,37) «con la lingua (*byad leššana*) / a Colui il cui silenzio scandaglia il cuore».[20] Se Gesù non ha tuttavia impedito previamente quest'uso inconsulto della lingua, lo ha fatto per dare un più generale ammaestramento, ossia che l'uomo deve saper commisurare le sue azioni, e ancor prima le sue parole, alla sua propria misura, ovvero alla sua «pochezza» nei confronti di Dio.

Se poi non si è capaci di elevare la lode conveniente, si evitino almeno le offese e le discussioni che esacerbano gli animi e non

[16] Cf. *Inni sulla Chiesa* 9,3, ed. Beck 1960, 22.

[17] Cf. *Inni sulla Chiesa* 35,15, ivi, 89.

[18] Così anche in *Inni contro le Dottrine erronee* 29,29, ed. Beck 1957b, 118, dove il termine è inserito peraltro in una meditata introspezione sul sogno e sul sonno.

[19] *Inni sulla Chiesa* 42,11, ed. Beck 1960, 107; trad. it. Vergani 2017, 51; cf. inoltre Vergani 2022.

[20] *Inni sulla Chiesa* 25,1, ed. Beck 1960, 54; trad. it. Vergani 2017, 33. Ma cf. *Inni sulla Verginità* 15,7, ed. Beck 1962, 53, in cui la richiesta è positivamente interpretata da Efrem, perché la visione del trono stimola i due fratelli all'imitazione di Cristo.

servono a null'altro. Efrem avverte che l'ansia e l'agitazione possono deturpare lo «spirito insieme alla lingua» e che occorre fare ogni sforzo per conservare quest'ultima pura.[21] Simile apostrofe può essere rivolta direttamente alla «lingua (*'a[w] leššana*)», la cui eloquenza distorta conduce sicuramente alla rovina.[22] Infatti, mortale è il suo colpo invisibile, come fu in origine per il corpo la lingua melliflua del serpente.[23] La coscienza etica che richiede il suo uso è resa palese con immagini vivide in una strofa ancora degli *Inni sulla Chiesa*. Consapevole della doppiezza e dell'inganno che possono celarsi nel discorso, Efrem non nasconde quanto sia malleabile, in bene o in male, lo strumento che Dio ha dato all'uomo per una reciproca corrispondenza d'amore e di lode:

> La lingua è (come) un veicolo (a cavallo) approntato
> per tutte le parole, che esse siano perbene o malvagie:
> perciò le servono le briglie,
> per tenere a freno la sua corsa impetuosa.
> Infatti, il suo percorso (scorre) in mezzo a precipizi,
> tanto che neppure con severi custodi
> può completare la corsa di un solo giorno
> senza cadute ed inciampi.[24]

2. L'insufficienza della lingua

Solo l'amore può vincere e spezzare gli aculei invisibili e acerbi della lingua (*l-'uqseh kasya w-marrira d-leššana*),[25] il cui compito è in realtà la lode a Dio. Tutto il mondo è infatti una grande bocca di cui le creature sono le labbra, mentre la lingua (*leššana*) ne rappresenta la verità (*qušta*).[26] Ma nessuno può ricambiare in modo adeguato la sovrabbondanza dei doni che la misericordia divina riversa amorevolmente su tutti. Infatti, quale «lingua» può

[21] *Inni di Nisibi* 18,11-12 ed. Beck 1963, 50; cf. trad. it. Vergani 2024, 80.
[22] *Inni sulla Chiesa* 29,6, ed. Beck 1960, 71.
[23] *Inni di Nisibi* 51,7, ed. Beck 1963, 71; cf. trad. it. Vergani 2024, 123-124.
[24] *Inni sulla Chiesa* 25,12, ed. Beck 1960, 56; trad. it. Vergani 2017, 37.
[25] *Inni di Nisibi* 40,4, ed. Beck
[26] *Inni sulla Chiesa* 41,1, ed. Beck 1960, 102.

essere in grado di glorificare il Creatore in pienezza?[27] Chi può avere la capacità di proferirne la lode o chi la forza di tacere?[28] In alcune strofe purtroppo lacunose, la confusione delle lingue che si verifica nell'episodio della torre di Babele (Gen 11,7) prelude al conferimento ai discepoli della «moltitudine di lingue (*suga' d-leššane*)» per edificare la «torre della nostra salvezza».[29] Dopo la divisione «in settanta lingue (*l-šab'in leššanin*)» ai tempi di Peleg (Gen 10,25), a Pentecoste (At 2,3) la terra fu ripartita tra gli apostoli in lingue (*b-leššane*).[30] In questi casi il termine *leššana* può avere varie sfumature (uso metaforico, lingua, popolo), ma importa sottolineare ancora il fatto che Efrem colga con chiarezza che un *medium* come la lingua sia ancipite. Essa schiude la bellezza della vita: «la mia lingua (*leššan[y]*) debole ha osato esprimere la ricchezza della Maestà (divina)»; «invita le orecchie affamate al banchetto».[31] La stessa può suscitare un timore correttivo: «La spada inquieta l'assassino – la lingua di verità (*leššana d-qušta*) gli increduli».[32] E, infine, è una metafora per Pietro, divenuto come capo e «come lingua (*a[y]k leššana*) per il corpo dei (lett.: tuoi) fratelli (*l-gušma d-'aḥḥayk*)».[33]

3. Il silenzio e la lode della lingua

I testi escussi sinora fanno risaltare il tema dell'insufficienza della lingua a fronte del Creatore, ma negli *Inni sulla fede* si accentua ancor di più questo "apofatismo".[34] La denuncia dell'incolmabile distanza tra Creatore e creatura è un punto qualificante della

[27] Cf. anche *Inni sul Paradiso* 10,1, ed. Beck 1957a, 42.
[28] *Inni sulla Chiesa* 49,4, ed. Beck 1960, 126.
[29] *Inni sulla Verginità* 40,11-12, ed. Beck 1962, 141.
[30] Così *Inni sulla Natività* 1,46, ed. Beck 1959, 6.
[31] *Inni sulla Verginità* 4,15-16, ed. Beck 1962, 16-17.
[32] *Inni sulla Verginità* 5,13,2, ivi, 20.
[33] *Inni sulla Verginità* 15,7,2, ivi, 53.
[34] «Se per i pittori - è arduo ritrarre per noi, /con i colori, il vento, - la lingua di chi ha ritratto / la generazione che alcuna bocca ha espresso - con le sue voci»? (*Inni sulla fede* 33,4, ed. Beck 1955, 110). Le traduzioni degli *Inni sulla fede* sono di chi scrive; una traduzione italiana di questa collezione si trova in appendice a Benetton 2011, 147-346; per gli *Inni sulla fede* 81-85, invece, Vergani 2005.

polemica teologica efremiana. Infatti, se può dirsi beato chi ha visto nello «specchio terso della verità» la generazione del Figlio, che trascende «tutte le lingue»,[35] non lo è meno chi ha saputo trattenerla, la sua lingua, dall'indagare ciò su cui non è possibile porre domande.[36] Il silenzio, come insegna la lode degli angeli, è infatti il *medium* più adatto per adorare il Figlio; perciò la lingua (quando uso questo termine, in siriaco è sempre *leššana*), va educata a frenare l'audacia,[37] a non essere un mero «ponte di voci» senza alcun discernimento.[38] La Maestà divina non può essere scrutata e la lingua di chi osa farlo deve essere subito redarguita.[39] Non può infatti vagare «in quella Grandezza nel cui seno / è posta l'(intera) ecumene come in un palmo di mano».[40] Nessuna corsa porta chi erra in tale immensità a Colui che vi si cela,[41] né lingua può intenderne la voce se, prima, Egli non le avesse assunte tutte per rivolgersi all'uomo:

> È troppo piccolo l'uomo per poter intendere tutte le lingue;
> e se potesse intendere la lingua dei Veglianti di spirito,
> allora sarebbe condotto in alto fino ad intendere il silenzio,
> quello che è proferito tra il Padre e suo Figlio.
> È straniera la nostra lingua rispetto alla voce degli animali;
> la lingua dei Veglianti è straniera più di ogni lingua.

[35] *Inni sulla fede* 2,1, ed. Beck 1955, 5.

[36] *Inni sulla fede* 2,8, ivi, 6. Il padre dei credenti stesso è lo stupefacente modello di chi sa quando parlare e quando no. Infatti Abramo, senza indagare, questionare, disquisire (tutti i verbi che Efrem normalmente usa per indicare l'insolente ricerca degli scrutatori ariani), ha legato l'amato figlio della promessa, e, senza verbo proferire, «trattenne la sua lingua (*ḥamleh leššaneh*) / e estrasse il suo coltello» (*Inni sulla fede* 56,3,5-6, ivi, 174).

[37] *Inni sulla fede* 3,9, ivi, 8. Inoltre: «Le contese li provocano / a dire qualcosa che la lingua / non (può) sapere» (*Inni sulla fede* 66,17, ivi, 205); «Il Maligno, con le lingue / che furono confuse, - ha confuso ai nostri giorni / la chiesa al posto di Babele» (*Inni sulla fede* 60,12,4-6, ivi, 187-188).

[38] *Inni sulla fede* 23,15,4, ivi, 83.

[39] *Inni sulla fede* 3,4, ivi, 8. «La sua natura (*kyaneh*) eccede tutte le bocche / ed è straniera, completamente, a tutte le lingue» (*Inni sulla fede* 26,5,3-4, ivi, 90).

[40] *Inni sulla fede* 11,4,3-4, ivi, 53.

[41] *Inni sulla fede* 11,10, ivi, 54.

> Il silenzio con il quale il Padre proferisce con il suo amato
> è straniero ai Veglianti.[42]

Dato questo abisso invalicabile, Dio stesso si è disposto a comunicare con l'uomo, che, a sua volta, deve corrispondere all'iniziativa divina. La necessità di custodire il silenzio non tocca la lingua quando deve esprimere la fede che, per così dire, può raccogliere come un'offerta da «rami rivestiti di parola e di silenzio».[43] Così Efrem crea, se è lecito esprimersi in questo modo, una vera e propria dialettica tra silenzio e parola, che si configura in semplici immagini naturali e quotidiane, come l'alternanza del giorno, «il nostro discorso», alla notte, «il nostro silenzio, / poiché pure l'orecchio e la lingua anelano al riposo».[44] Questa dialettica è per Efrem idonea a descrivere il corretto rapporto dell'uomo con Dio o, almeno, la relazione con la divinità che, nella condizione propria dell'umanità, il teologo-poeta nisibeno ritiene sia possibile stabilire: «Sigilla la tua bocca nel silenzio: la tua lingua non sia avventata!»[45] Se la fede giustifica l'articolazione della lingua, l'opportunità del silenzio si gioca sul piano della creaturalità e fragilità umana. L'invito al silenzio presuppone, con realismo, l'ammissione onesta del limite in cui è l'uomo, «fatto, figlio del plasmato (dalla terra)», non senza richiamare forse una tradizione interpretativa del *nosce te ipsum*,[46] poiché il verso che segue quello appena citato inizia proprio con *da' napšak*

[42] *Inni sulla fede* 11,7-8, *ibid.*

[43] *Inni sulla fede* 13,10, ivi, 61. Sulla lingua «che raccoglie», in altro caso, «dai salmi (*men mazmure*)», cf. *Inni sulla fede* 23,16,4, ivi, 83.

[44] *Inni sulla fede* 38,9, ivi, 126.

[45] *Inni sulla fede* 15,5,1, ivi, 64. «Smettete (di parlare), o bocche, custodite il silenzio, o lingue!» (*Inni sulla fede* 37,17,1, ivi, 123); «Smetta la lingua (di parlare), non è in grado»! (*Inni contro le dottrine erronee* 39,11, ed. Beck 1957b, 160).

[46] Nel disegno salvifico, «le stirpi e le lingue (ossia: i popoli), / e i greci (*yawnaye*), che meditano nelle cose invisibili, / si preparavano a venire al discepolato (di Cristo)». Tutti presi in una rete, «nell'unico giogo di verità, / insegnava loro l'unica corsa della concordia» (*Inni sulla fede* 79,3,1-3.7-8, ed. Beck 1955, 242).

(appunto: «conosci te stesso»).[47] E prosegue asseverando, come detto, il ristretto orizzonte in cui deve collocarsi l'essere creato.

Nell'ampio spettro di impieghi che ha il termine in esame sono da considerare poi gli usi metaforici, come «lingue di fuoco»,[48] o le espressioni come «lingue e lampi».[49] Ma alla lingua è assegnato anche il compito di «tesoriere», mentre l'istruzione è il «tesoro» e la «voce o melodia (*qala*)» è la «chiave» della fede, sempre pronta a fornire «la verità agli ascoltatori».[50] Il termine ricorre poi in allusioni esegetiche a specifici episodi biblici,[51] o anche in più generali considerazioni di tipo etico, come quando Efrem fa osservare la ricchezza di tutti i beni che il Creatore ha donato agli uomini e l'inutilità di disquisire e interrogare su tutto, poiché Egli ha dato tutto;[52] oppure chiaramente allude a un uso pacifico e nonviolento del linguaggio,[53] per cui nessuno deve usare la lingua come una spada sguainata per colpire l'avversario o le parole

[47] Payne Smith 1879, 1555, lo cita riprendendolo da Kalilah e Dimna e dà la versione greca: γνῶθι σεαυτόν; non devo approfondirne il senso, che è solo tangenziale a questo studio, incentrato sulla «lingua»; che Efrem lo utilizzi con piena consapevolezza o meno, è difficile dire; in ogni caso, pare che lo intenda nel senso dell'antica sapienza delfica, come riconoscimento della finitezza umana. Più in generale sulla filosofia greca in Efrem, cf. Possekel 1999.

[48] «E narrò la bocca - e pure la lingua, / come le lingue - di fuoco che dimorarono / sopra i discepoli. * Lo Spirito santo, - con il suo calore, / per mezzo delle lingue, - bandì il silenzio / dai discepoli. (…) * Lo Spirito Santo, - per mezzo delle lingue / di fuoco che giunsero, - sciolse l'intensità / del gelo. * E bandì il timore dai discepoli, / e il silenzio fuggì - dalle lingue / per mezzo delle lingue (*Inni sulla fede* 74,19-20.23-24, ed. Beck 1955, 227-228).

[49] «Chi oserà (scrutare) il generato della Maestà (divina), / poiché è il figlio del seno, che è fuoco che consuma, / e lampi e lingue divampano da esso»? (*Inni sulla fede* 28,11, ivi, 98).

[50] *Inni sulla fede* 13,7, ivi, 61.

[51] Le strofe di *Inni sulla fede* 24,6-7, ivi, 84, sulla scorta del capitolo 25 di 1Sam, invitano a fuggire il cattivo esempio di Nabal e della sua lingua ingiuriosa.

[52] «Cosa non t'ha dato, - su cui ogni giorno (non) è estratta / la tua critica e la tua lingua? (*Inni sulla fede* 58,9, ivi, 181).

[53] «I miserabili - hanno estratto le loro lingue, / colpirono e furono colpiti - e, poiché non c'era sangue, / neppure alcuna paura. * Piena di collera è la spada, - sebbene sia miserabile, / sprezzante la lingua sebbene sia assassina, / poiché è la cecità!» (*Inni sulla fede* 68,6-7, ivi, 210).

come frecce all'arco.[54] Efrem, nondimeno, è conscio d'essere in mezzo a una «disputa malvagia» che sarebbe bene estinguere senza gettare veleno agli ascoltatori.[55] Come nella coltivazione delle piante la potatura è necessaria per ottenere la migliore fioritura e il più abbondante raccolto, così è della lingua di un membro della chiesa: se ha la radice in Cristo non deve temere di affrontare i tagli che servono a far dimenticare il suo frutto amaro.[56]

In un gran numero di casi, infine, il termine lingua ricorre nella funzione sua propria che è quella di dar lode. Essa è allora la «cetra» su cui risuonano melodie «capaci di sanare i loro uditori»;[57] è lo «strumento schietto» di chi dice la verità «che procede – dai profeti e dagli apostoli».[58] Essa non può astenersi dalla confessione e dalla lode, che il servo eleva al suo Signore, né lasciar inaridire «il flusso dolce / che tu hai fatto sgorgare alla mia

[54] Cf. *Inni sulla fede* 15,11, ivi, 65. In *Sermo de Domino Nostro*, ed. Beck 1966, 22, Dio ottiene la conversione di Paolo con «una lingua delicata (*leššana rakkika*)», per insegnare come trattare con le «menti dure». Per la metafora lingua-spada, cf. anche in *Inni sulla fede* 37,18, ed. Beck 1955, 124: «Una spada sguainata (sei), o lingua! / sta' chiusa nel tuo fodero, tu che parli (in modo insensato)! / La disputa ha affilato il discorso della tua bocca, / il silenzio del Figlio smussi la punta acuminata della tua disquisizione».

[55] *Inni sulla fede* 15,11, ivi, 65. Del resto: «Che danno reca - a Dio la tua controversia? / (…) Su, va' a chieder conto - al tuo avversario, / che ti ha finito con la tua (stessa) lingua. - Lode a chi t'ha sconfitto»! (*Inni sulla fede* 52,6, ivi, 162).

[56] Cf. *Inni sulla fede* 15,9, ivi, 64-65.

[57] *Inni sulla fede* 2,15, ivi, 6. «Come potrà, mio Signore, la mia arpa tacere la tua gloria? / Come poi, mia lingua, potrò propagare l'ingratitudine? / Il tuo amore permette la parresia al mio volto confuso: / e la mia volontà sarebbe ingrata»? (*Inni sulla fede* 14,9, ivi, 63). Per Efrem, non ci sono membra impure; in polemica con chi spregia l'unione coniugale, sostiene che allora tutte le membra dovrebbero essere interdette, e tra queste la lingua, cf. *Inni contro le dottrine erronee* 45,8, ed. Beck 1957b, 180. Il *Commentario al Diatessaron* 6,7-8, ed. Leloir 1990, 64, si chiede se, col taglio della lingua, possano cessare le ingiurie e nota che Pietro, per essere uomo nuovo, ha lasciato tutto (Mt 19,27) ma non le membra dell'uomo vecchio. Non si devono tagliare le belle membra che «la divinità ha composto insieme», ma estirpare i cattivi pensieri che la libertà «compone».

[58] *Inni sulla fede* 2,23, ed. Beck 1955, 7.

mente assetata di te».[59] Anche se povera, la lingua può avere un leggero soffio dello Spirito «per proclamare la gloria / di Colui che è più grande di tutto».[60] La natura per Efrem, che riecheggia il salmo, prende parte alla lode: sono i cieli a narrare la gloria di Dio, è il silenzio a sussurrare «tutto di lui in tutte le lingue» e il firmamento racconta a tutte le lingue, ovvero a tutti popoli, «la gloria del suo Creatore»:[61]

> Nostro Signore, la mia lingua sia un calamo per (per celebrare) la tua gloria,
> e il dito della tua grazia possa vergare e scrivere con esso un'omelia (in grado di recare) aiuto. Il calamo, mio Signore, non può scrivere da sé, per suo volere, senza chi lo tenga in mano.
> Non sia sviata la mia lingua a dire, senza di te,
> qualcosa che non è d'aiuto. Lodi al tuo insegnamento![62]

4. Per concludere. Il linguaggio del silenzio

Sebbene la sua composizione sia elaborata e complessa, il *Commentario al Diatessaron* resta un importante documento del mondo legato alla tradizione efremiana più antica.[63] Del resto Efrem ha certo esercitato notevole influenza sulla tradizione esegetica del suo tempo. Anche il *Commentario* coglie gli aspetti paradossali che si producono in ogni forma comunicativa e nell'uso della "lingua", come mostrano i testi illustrati in precedenza. Si ripresentano così sottili associazioni di temi che toccano diversi piani di pensiero, sebbene la riflessione teologica e la meditazione sulla storia salvifica siano i filoni salienti di quest'opera. Ad esempio, commentando l'"incredulità" di Zaccaria alle parole dell'angelo Gabriele (Lc 1,18), il *Commentario* articola un'accurata esegesi su molteplici aspetti (che non devo ripercorrere e approfondire in questa sede), tutti convergenti a

[59] *Inni sulla fede* 16,1,3-4, ivi, 65.

[60] *Inni sulla fede* 25,1, ivi, 85.

[61] *Inni sulla fede* 11,6, ivi, 53. «Confessiamo con tutte le nostre bocche il Signore di tutte le lingue» (*Inni sulla fede* 24,11, ivi, 85).

[62] *Inni sulla fede* 51,6, ivi, 159.

[63] Cf. le conclusioni di Lange 2004, 143-144.

dimostrare la veracità dei fatti salvifici. Zaccaria, ammutolito, si fa suo malgrado testimone della nascita verginale: «E la lingua (*leššana*) che era sciolta fu legata, per apprendere che era possibile sciogliere il ventre legato. Egli conobbe infatti che Colui che ha legato la lingua può sciogliere anche il ventre».[64] Così, per paradosso il messaggio non fu annunciato con le parole e la lingua, ma col silenzio imposto come ammonimento a Zaccaria: «La lingua fu infatti punita, affinché fosse corretta la mente, poiché è la mente che tiene le briglia delle labbra».[65]

Nel *Commentario al Diatessaron* il termine lingua compare anche in qualche glossa sulla torre di Babele e sulla Trasfigurazione. Una lingua, si spiega, fu suddivisa a Babele in molteplici lingue così che gli uomini non salissero al cielo, né confidassero più in una torre che nella giustizia. Ma, una volta dileguatasi quella torre, il Vivificatore ha innalzato sia la torre della Chiesa che porta sino al cielo, sia un albero il cui frutto, l'Eucaristia, dona la vita.[66] Nell'episodio della Trasfigurazione si scopre invece la centralità dell'incarnazione. Il commento spiega infatti perché si addormentarono i discepoli e si domanda come sarebbe stato possibile per l'uomo accogliere Cristo, se fosse apparso nella gloria e non nel corpo. E poi, infine, come sarebbe stato possibile essere istruiti con la lingua da Colui che non ha la lingua?[67] Una domanda che torna a mescolare in modo inestricabile i linguaggi, verbali e non verbali, con cui avviene la comunicazione tra gli uomini, e con cui alcuni provano ad accostare Dio. Robert Murray s.j. così chiudeva un suo illuminante studio sul simbolismo di Efrem: «Others may well have thought they caught a passing whiff of Wittgenstein. But such comparisons must await some other

[64] *Commentario al Diatessaron* I,12, ed. Leloir 1963, 10.

[65] *Commentario al Diatessaron* I,14, ivi, 12. Cf. *Inni sulla fede* 21,4, ed. Beck 1955, 77: «O sterile Zaccaria, che per la sua parola divenne sterile, / poiché la sua lingua ha messo in dubbio come potesse generare».

[66] *Commentario al Diatessaron* XIV,2, ed. Leloir 1963, 114. *Commentario al Diatessaron* XXI,33, ivi, 232, chiede al lettore di prestare attenzione a due opere ammirevoli: il Padre divise le lingue dei peccatori della Torre di Babele, mentre lo Spirito divise quelle degli apostoli. Maggiore è l'opera dello Spirito.

[67] *Commentario al Diatessaron* XIV,7, ivi, 118.

occasion».[68] Non saprei valutare questa intuizione, né aggiungere altro. Spero solo che i testi presentati mostrino la loro capacità di far riflettere.

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Efrem, Ammiano e il "lupo" Giuliano. Contesto storico e lessico della discordia

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Beginning with the analysis of a specific type of lexicon that draws on the animal world in a strictly symbolic sense, this study aims to show how its nonchalant and varied use allowed Ephrem of Nisibis to construct a polemic that was not limited to theological aspects but went beyond them, in more than one case crossing the boundary that separates the didactic function of a text from its political meaning.

Keywords: Lexicon – symbolism – binary structure – wolf – political controversies

1. Perché Giuliano? Come nasce la polemica contro l'Apostata

Se il contesto religioso del quarto secolo è contrassegnato da un sincretismo che reinterpreta sé stesso, in stretta connessione con il monoteismo cristiano, e che trova una sua sintesi significativa nell'iscrizione posta sull'arco di Costantino, nella valle del Colosseo, dove si legge *INSTINCTU DIVINITAS* senza alcuna specificazione se si tratti della divinità cristiana o di quelle pagane, l'approccio di Giuliano all'impero, di cui assunse la guida dopo la morte di Costanzo II, è chiaro sin dalle origini. Membro della famiglia costantiniana, la madre Basilina fu di origini bitiniche mentre la nonna Massimiana Teodora vantava legami parentali con la *pars Orientis*, già nella sua famiglia si 'intrecciavano' Oriente e Occidente e nella città dove nacque nel 331, Costantinopoli, l'Impero d'Oriente si apprestava a gemellarsi con quello

d'Occidente[1] A ciò si unì una formazione verosimilmente consona per un rampollo della famiglia imperiale ma assai suggestiva per il giovane 'apprendista'. Infatti, il viaggio ad Atene nel 355 dove entra in contatto con personalità quali Basilio di Cesarea[2] e Gregorio di Nazianzo e, fra le altre, le letture di Platone e Marco Aurelio, l'imperatore filosofo,[3] insieme all'indelebile impronta lasciatagli in eredità dalla speculazione neoplatonica di Giamblico,[4] rappresentarono da un certo momento in poi, una ventata di speranza per i pagani. Questi, non pochi per la verità, si appellarono alla protezione dell'imperatore per "decristianizzare" quell'Impero che Costantino aveva resto più forte, accordandogli privilegi e impunità. Pertanto Giuliano, più tardi stigmatizzato come Apostata per aver rinnegato il credo cristiano di cui la sua famiglia era nutrita, volle attuare una reazione non soltanto pagana, ma segnatamente etico-filosofica, all'insegna di quella cultura classica che lo aveva formato intellettualmente e idealmente.[5]

Giuliano, per la sua formazione scelse la filosofia al posto della retorica, che non escluse totalmente apprezzandone appieno il valore educativo, perché la riteneva più idonea a raggiungere la verità.[6] Tuttavia, nonostante la sua fede nell'antica sapienza, l'Apostata non centrò il suo obiettivo che consisteva nell'operare una rinascita ellenistica, grazie alla quale «culture e religioni antiche si sarebbero alleate per riconquistare il terreno occupato, ormai da un secolo, nella società romana, dal cristianesimo in piena espansione.»[7] L'ideale politico e religioso di Giuliano "navigava" nelle stesse acque: la conquista territoriale non era più intesa solo in senso politico ma anche in quello più chiaramente religioso, secondo il quale la religione diventa il mezzo più

[1] Fontaine – Prato – Marcone 2006, 15. Sulla figura di Giuliano si veda specialmente, Bowersock 1978.

[2] Cf. Di Berardino 2006-2008,1: 724-732.

[3] Dagnino 1996, 11.

[4] Ivi, 15

[5] Fontaine – Prato – Marcone 2006, 9.

[6] Ivi, 22.

[7] Ivi, 11.

efficace per concretizzare l'*universalitas* e diffondere il potere imperiale. Non si tratta più solo di occupare uno spazio per imporre la propria supremazia o promuovere una politica di espansione sui territori, ma di una questione, oramai, anche e soprattutto ideologica e religiosa: «di lì a poco, con fervore d'animo, Giuliano avrebbe concepito e propugnato il disegno d'una restaurazione, identicamente politica e religiosa, del suo ideale d'ellenismo.»[8]

1.1 Il retroscena storico degli Inni contro Giuliano

Fra il 359 e il 360 Shapur II, dopo aver posto in assedio la città di Nisibi per ben tre volte, nel 337, 346 e 350, attaccò Amida, Singara e Bezadbe, spingendo alla reazione l'imperatore romano Costanzo II che, nel solco di una tradizionale linea espansionistica della politica romana, decise di inviare Giuliano, allora Cesare in Gallia, verso Est.[9] Nel 360 questi venne acclamato Augusto dalle sue truppe mentre si trovava nel Campo di Marte a *Lutetia Parisiorum* – odierna Parigi – ereditando anche la guerra. Di certo una vittoriosa campagna contro la Persia avrebbe migliorato la reputazione dell'imperatore e favorito l'affermazione della sua politica religiosa.[10] Senza soffermarci sul susseguirsi degli eventi che scandirono l'impresa persiana di Giuliano, assai noti, basti ricordare in questa sede che il 26 giugno del 363 l'imperatore morì in seguito alle gravi ferite riportate durante un'incursione improvvisa.[11] Gli successe Gioviano, comandante di cavalleria[12] che scenderà a patti con Shapur, consapevole che la guerra non sarebbe cessata nell'immediato.[13] L'accordo, negoziato nel 363, prevedeva che Gioviano dovesse cedere tre delle cinque regioni oltre il Tigri – nell'orbita dell'impero di Roma a partire dalla

[8] Dagnino 1996, 16.
[9] Lieu 1989, 89.
[10] Ivi, 90.
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] *Ibid.* Amm. Marc. XXV 5, 1-7.
[13] Ivi, 94.

vittoria di Galerio del 297 – tra cui Nisibi[14] e Singara: i cittadini potevano però lasciare le città,[15] mentre Shapur riusciva a conquistare parte dell'Armenia.[16] In cambio i romani erano liberi di tornare indietro e raggiungere Nisibi, dove i cristiani «were not displeased to see the corpse of Julian who had earlier refused to guarantee their protection on the grounds of their religion.»[17] Questo lo scenario che fece da sfondo al pensiero e all'opera di Efrem che rimase «to see it was like to live under Persian domination»:[18] secondo alcune leggende postume il dottore siro invocherà la peste; secondo altre il vescovo Giacomo di Nisibi (ܝܥܩܘܒ ܕܢܨܝܒܝܢ) pregò Dio affinché scagliasse zanzare e moscerini contro i Persiani.[19] Entrambe rappresentano il resoconto di un turbamento profondo, quale dovette essere quello che colpì, fra gli altri, i due personaggi, spettatori sgomenti del cambiamento ma nondimeno tenaci detrattori della politica giulianea, al punto di "rallegrarsi" quasi alla vista del corpo morto dell'imperatore Apostata e di accettare le conseguenze ignominiose della capitolazione del cristiano Gioviano, che li avrebbe resi sudditi dei persiani.

1.2 Efrem: l'"arpa dello Spirito" e gli Inni contro Giuliano

Come accade per molti autori siriaci, anche per Efrem la lettura approfondita delle sue opere ci restituisce meglio di altre testimonianze, per la verità assai scarse a riguardo, l'identità del personaggio, i suoi sentimenti e le sue posizioni nei confronti degli eventi a lui contemporanei. La feconda produzione innografica di Efrem ci ha restituito la visione sofferta del poeta

[14] *Ibid.* La cessione di Nisibi ai Sasanidi consentiva ai persiani di ottenere anche una vittoria strategica: infatti, la città costituiva la via preferenziale per invadere la Mesopotamia romana. Successivamente, Anastasio creerà Dara sul *limes* per controllare il territorio.

[15] In particolare, nel trattato, si concede a Nisibi di tornare nell'orbita di Roma dopo un periodo di 120 anni, Amm. Marc. XXV 7, 5-11.

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] Soz. *HE* V 3,5, trad. Lieu 1989, 94

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] *Ibid.*

che assiste in poco tempo all'ascesa e alla caduta di colui che rappresenta ai suoi occhi la minaccia peggiore per i cristiani di Siria, Giuliano l'Apostata, sebbene vi sia il concreto pericolo dei persiani alle porte – una dominazione odiosa, perché ancora fresco il ricordo dell'ultima, sanguinosa persecuzione – sebbene ciò comporti una sudditanza penosa. E «l'arpa dello Spirito che giornalmente annaffia il popolo di Siria con i fiumi della grazia» come lo chiama Teodoreto,[20] non tarda a impiegare il suo strumento migliore per fissare in versi una polemica politica arricchita da un lessico che, come vedremo, non lascia alcun dubbio sull'intento denigratorio dell'autore, ancorché inquadrato all'interno di una visione teologica.

I quattro *Inni contro Giuliano* sono giunti a noi attraverso il manoscritto British Library Add. 14571, ff. 105v-114r, risalente al VI sec., che contiene al suo interno solo inni efremiani.[21] Il *colophon* ricorda che il libro «…fu completato nell'anno 830 a Tešri secondo il calcolo di Apamea e scritto da Giuliano, lo scriba edesseno.» La data riportata è il 519 e, sia lo scriba sia il presbitero, sono ignoti.[22] Da una delle *Vitae* siriache di Efrem apprendiamo che il poeta ha effettivamente scritto «mēmrē contro l'empio Giuliano…e sulla persecuzione dei vescovi da parte di questo uomo malvagio»;[23] nonostante si tratti di materiale non particolarmente attendibile, tale affermazione può essere accolta, confermando la partecipazione di Efrem ai fatti narrati.[24] I quattro *Inni* sono preceduti dallo stesso incipit *ʾestmekw ʿal qûštā*, *affidarsi alla verità*, e si trovano insieme ai quindici *Inni sul Paradiso,* come nell'edizione di Beck,[25] poiché condividono la stessa melodia.[26]

[20] *Ibid.* Theod., *Ep.* 146.
[21] *Ibid.*
[22] Griffith 1987, 238-266.
[23] *Acta syr. S. Ephr.* 36. Lieu 1989, 98.
[24] *Ibid.*
[25] Beck 1957.
[26] Griffith 1987, 240.

1.3 Il 'lupo Giuliano' e altre figure: I Inno contro Giuliano

Il tema centrale degli *Inni contro Giuliano* è sicuramente rappresentato dalla morte dell'imperatore apostata,[27] collegata alla perdita di Nisibi e seguita dall'avvento del cristiano Gioviano, che fa risorgere la speranza nei cristiani e nel loro credo.[28] Efrem considera la cessione di Nisibi alla stregua di una punizione divina, in stretta connessione con l'ostilità mostrata dall'Apostata nei confronti del cristianesimo e dei cristiani che lo consideravano un mistificatore, sedicente astrologo, perverso idolatra e scandaloso *restaurator templorum*.[29] Per indicare tutti questi aspetti della personalità di Giuliano evidenziandone i tratti peggiori, Efrem ricorse ad un lessico specifico che si avvalse di numerosi simboli provenienti dal mondo animale, secondo una tradizione già cara ai classici e di sicura derivazione ellenistica. L'intento di Efrem, al di là dell'uso disinvolto del simbolismo, più volte ricondotto a una consuetudine diffusa fra gli autori di lingua e cultura siriaca, fu sicuramente anche politico e la breve analisi dei primi due inni contro Giuliano, il loro confronto con fonti cristiane e pagane, presentati in questa sede, confermano, a nostro avviso, la coscienza politica e il senso storico dell'autore. Il primo *Inno* si apre con un riferimento diretto all'imperatore apostata, che mostra chiaramente l'insofferenza di Efrem rivolta a chi porta lo *scettro regale*: «...il Re che si volse al paganesimo»;[30] quindi un *Re* che, *volgendosi* verso l'*errore* abbandona la *retta via* perseguita dai suoi predecessori: nella sostanza un *traditore*. Il teologo ama il simbolismo dal sapore esopico e, ogni volta che può, sfrutta le immagini tratte dal mondo animale come strumento d'elezione della sua *vis* polemica:

> Gli animali (selvaggi) lo videro e furono contenti,
> così fecero i lupi (ܕܐܒܐ) che (erano) dalla sua parte, il leopardo e
> perfino le volpi (ܐܠܦܝܟܐ) alzarono le loro voci.[31]

[27] *Acta syr. S. Ephr.* 36. Lieu 1989, 102.
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] *AE* 1969 n. 70
[30] Ivi, 105.
[31] Trad. dell'autrice.

Nell'immaginario del dottore siro gli animali selvaggi sono soprattutto gli eretici e gli Ebrei.[32] A riguardo sono probanti i riferimenti ai *lupi* e alle *volpi* che a più riprese troviamo nella letteratura, non solo siriaca: si pensi alle anonime *Storie Epiche Armene*, *Buzandaran Patmut'iwnk'*, risalenti al 470, dove sono presenti indubbi siriacismi sia nello stile che nel lessico.[33] Il *lupo* (ܙܐܒܐ), animale aggressivo in branco e vile quando è solo, diventa, per il grande teologo e poeta, la rappresentazione calzante dell'uomo doppio: cristiano prima, di nascita e formazione, pagano poi, per indole e per scelta. Anche la valenza simbolica della descrizione del *leone* e della *volpe*, a partire dall'ideologia biblica, è stata ribaltata per trasformarsi in materia polemica rivolta con efficacia contro l'Apostata.[34] Si deve rintracciarne l'origine in *Nat.* VI 19-20 quando Efrem critica aspramente l'imperatore pagano, che viene posto sullo stesso piano di Erode il Grande. Tuttavia, saranno i quattro *Inni contro Giuliano*, che costituiscono la testimonianza più esplicita dell'abilità polemica e delle posizioni politiche di Efrem, composti dopo il 363 – quindi dopo la morte dell'Apostata – a fornire con chiarezza il significato che si cela dietro l'uso allegorico dell'immagine del *leone*, per indicare il coraggio, e della *volpe*, per rivelare la viltà.[35] Successivamente, in letteratura, il confronto tra le due figure, metafore del *giusto* e dell'*ingiusto*, in un'accezione che travalica il significato teologico per comprenderne anche uno politico, diventa evidente nel *Romanzo di Giuliano*, opera dalla complessa trasmissione testuale – due testi di cui il primo, più affidabile è risalente al V sec., mentre il secondo, molto composito, è posteriore –, che attinge chiaramente a Efrem.[36] Tale simbolismo dal gusto esopico affiora nuovamente nelle composizioni in greco di Romano il Melode (prima metà del VI secolo), questa volta collegato a un altro

[32] Cf. Griffith 1987, 251-252.

[33] Papoutsakis 2007, 30.

[34] Ivi, 31.

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] Sokoloff 2017. Sul *Romanzo* e il suo rapporto con l'opera di Efrem siro, si veda soprattutto Contini 2015, 284-305.

racconto, che ha come protagonisti l'*aquila* e l'*avvoltoio*.[37] Un bestiario positivo di questo genere è già presente nell'opera di Giacomo di Sarug (ܡܐܡܪ̈ܐ ܕܝܥܩܘܒ), alla quale ebbe accesso Romano che, in più di un caso, attinge con certezza a fonti siriache.[38] Nel *Misopogon* Giuliano *ruggisce* con chiaro riferimento al simbolo leonino di Costantino, espressione del potere imperiale, in significativa contrapposizione alla *volpe* Erode, confermando la prospettiva giulianea come nettamente rovesciata rispetto alle concezioni efremiane.[39] In Efrem la *volpe* appare meschina e caparbia, caratteristiche che ritroviamo attribuite a Erode il Grande e, per traslazione, a Giuliano e che, nell'ottica dei polemisti cristiani, simboleggiano il declino inevitabile di un impero.[40] Il *Romanzo di Giuliano* torna ancora sul *leone* e sulla *volpe*[41] per esporre in modo trasparente ciò che in Efrem era velato – ma non per questo meno icastico –, vale a dire l'esatto parallelo tra Giuliano ed Erode:

> Dove sono i potenti leoni (ܐܪ̈ܝܐ) della casa di Costantino alla cui voce ruggente tremarono i re della terra e il loro cuore tremava per la loro paura? Ecco, oggi vili volpi (ܫܘܥ̈ܠܐ) osano sdraiarsi nelle loro

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] *Ibid.*

[39] Ivi, 33.

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] Ivi, 39-40. Fino a qualche tempo fa gli studi condotti sul testo ci hanno tramandato una tripartizione argomentativa del *Romanzo di Giuliano*: Costantino, Eusebio, vescovo di Roma che sfida Giuliano, e la lettera di Aploris indirizzata all'abate Abdil su Gioviano. Diversamente, un lavoro recente ha offerto una nuova lettura e nuova interessante datazione dell'opera. Lo studio parte dall'integrazione della prima sezione mancante del *Vat. sir.* 37, dove si narra della morte di Costanzo II, e giunge a dimostrare che la narrazione è stata composta da un unico autore e che la struttura tripartita non riflette più tre testi antichi e separati. Inoltre, identificando la *Cronaca Miscellanea del 640* come la fonte della maggior parte delle informazioni storiche contenute nel *Romanzo*, perviene a una nuova datazione che viene fissata alla prima metà del VII secolo, supportata da altre indicazioni cronologiche presenti nel testo. Si veda Mazzola – Van Nuffelen 2023. A suo tempo Nöldeke 1874 propose di datare il testo al principio del VI secolo, piuttosto che nel IV, dopo la morte di Shapur II nel 379, come invece ha sostenuto Drijvers 1994. Sull'argomento si vedano anche Brock – Muraviev 2001; Butts 2011; Drijvers 2011.

> tane, mostrando (emulando) attraverso le loro azioni che si considerano imperatori.[42]

In entrambe le fonti, il *Romanzo* ed Efrem, sebbene con modalità differenti il *leone*, che simboleggia la potenza, è legato esplicitamente alla casa di Costantino, imperatore convertitosi al cristianesimo, mentre la *volpe* vile e meschina adombra Giuliano, apostata e traditore. Ancora una volta è utile il paragone con il *Misopogon* giulianeo, dove si registra di nuovo la netta differenza con il testo efremiano e, in generale, con la prospettiva cristiana.[43] La metafora della *volpe*, ripresa da Efrem che attinge a un piccolo bestiario tratto da Pr. 30, 15-33, viene utilizzata dall'autore con una certa disinvoltura: in un caso il verbo *pavoneggiarsi*, con chiara connotazione provocatoria, non è attribuito alla *volpe*, bensì al *gallo*,[44] nell'ambito di un contesto più aderente alle suggestioni del mondo animale; in un altro invece il poeta assegna lo stesso predicato verbale alla *volpe* con l'intenzione di riferirsi proprio a Giuliano.[45] Sempre nel primo *Inno contro Giuliano,* Efrem rivolge parole asprissime ai pagani, illusi dagli atteggiamenti arroganti e dalla presunzione idolatra di Giuliano che, senza mezzi termini, viene definito *il maligno*.[46] In tutta l'opera il dottore siro riserva all'imperatore appellativi negativi, senza chiamarlo mai per nome, come diniego alla sua regalità; tra questi, l'epiteto *ṭrwn', tiranno*, prestito del greco *tyrannos*, ben si adatta ad un «Hellenising emperor.»[47] La retorica di Efrem è raffinata e pungente e quando si rivolge agli ultimi convertiti, sotto il regno di Costantino e di Costanzo II, *i re giusti*,[48] ricorre alla metafora del grano e dei semi, definendoli *seme tardivo*.[49] Nella sua ottica, è vero cristiano colui che raggiunge tale condizione coscienziosamente e dopo una lunga meditazione, mentre il *seme*

[42] Sokoloff 2017: 1, 164.
[43] Ivi., 246: «Il tiranno si arrabbiò, ruggì come un leone...».
[44] Papoutsakis 2007, 34. Si veda l'elenco in Pr. 30, 29-31.
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] *Jul. I, 7.* Cf. Lieu 1989, 106.
[47] Ivi.,107.
[48], *Jul. I, 12.*
[49], *Jul. I, 11.*

tardivo non attecchisce in profondità.[50] Altre immagini interessanti e ricche di significato ricorrono ancora nell'*Inno* in questione; per esempio, il *fuoco* e lo *specchio*:

> Il tiranno era il fuoco (ܢܘܪܐ) che raffinava la bellezza della fede….
> e i figli della sinistra alla testa della sinistra
> in lui potevano vedere sé stessi perché
> era uno specchio (ܐܒܣܟܬܐ) per tutti loro.[51]

In questo caso il *fuoco*, elemento presente in tutte le culture antiche, è inteso in senso ambivalente, legato sia alla fede che all'inganno. È un aspetto tipico della simbologia efremiana caratterizzata da duplicità sinonimica legata a uno stesso termine, e da binomia: la *binary structure* tra l'invisibile, la *fede* e l'*inganno*, e il visibile, il *fuoco* (ܢܘܪܐ). L'autore cerca di spiegare l'*ignoto* sfruttando i simboli del mondo circostante che costituiscono il *noto*.[52] Lo *specchio* (ܐܒܣܟܬܐ), invece, è riferito all'anima che riflette la vera essenza di ciascuno e costituisce una sorta di triangolo semiotico dove gli elementi collegati sono tre e non due: oltre a quello che si riflette e il suo riflesso, il terzo soggetto si trova dietro lo specchio,[53] rappresentando molto bene anche l'incarnazione divina. In ambito siriaco, l'uso frequente della simbologia è strettamente collegato alla funzione del teologo, come chiarisce Sabino Chialà:

> il teologo deve aprire il mistero di Dio, senza pretendere di costringerlo entro definizioni anguste. Queste, infatti, tentano di limitare colui che è illimitato e di definire l'Indefinibile, risultando dunque blasfeme. [...] Il teologo, che è poi anche esegeta – essendo tale distinzione moderna – non ha come compito quello di alterare lo statuto della Parola, vale a dire trasporre i simboli in concetti, ma semplicemente di introdurre il credente nel mondo dei simboli. [...] Anche le proprie parole, Efrem non le ritiene definizioni, ma piste di

[50], *Jul. I, 11.*

[51] Lieu 1989, 107-108. Cf. *Jul. I,* 13-14.

[52] Den Biesen 2006, 20. Da notare anche l'utilizzo dell'opposizione *verità* – *inganno* come parte integrante dell'*usus scribendi* di Efrem.

[53] Ponso 2011, 8. Sull'argomento anche Contini 2015, 304-306.

> comprensione, indizi che devono trovare un compimento nel lettore. La forma della Scrittura densa di misteri e di tipi, indirizza, dunque, anche la forma della teologia verso la poesia-simbolo, che di conseguenza non è solo un artificio letterario-formale, ma un metodo teologico deliberato.[54]

In quanto simbolo, lo specchio deve essere mantenuto pulito e luminoso (ܥܨܝܪܐ) ma, sovente, la visione riflessa è parziale o, addirittura, oscurata: quando non c'è luce, ci sono tenebre e se non è Dio è Giuliano, l'anticristo, secondo quel processo di contrapposizione tipico dell'interpretazione efremiana. A riguardo, Brock scrive:[55]

> Lo specchio, per riflettere l'immagine della persona che guarda in esso, deve anch'esso essere ܥܨܝܪܐ, "luminoso" – cioè pulito, dal momento che gli specchi nell'antichità erano di metallo e pertanto dovevano essere tenuti in uno stato di pulizia impeccabile per adempiere alla loro funzione. [...] Quest'aspetto dello specchio prende il primo posto quando Efrem parla dello specchio dell'Io – uno specchio che dovrebbe riflettere l'immagine divina, ma che troppo spesso è stato oscurato.

Nel prosieguo del primo *Inno,* oltre alla presenza di una terminologia evidentemente oppositiva, riassunta nella formulazione di un lessico specifico: *vittoria – caduta*, *infuriò – rallegrò* ecc.*,* desta interesse l'ennesima figura carica di valenze metaforiche, ancora una volta di sapore esopico, quella del *toro del paganesimo*:

> …Sulle sue monete videro il toro (ܬܘܪܐ), una cosa vergognosa,
> …iniziarono a celebrarlo.
> perché vedevano in quel toro il loro vitello di un tempo.[56]

Non sappiamo con precisione a cosa si riferisca Efrem in questo caso, se al *toro*, segno zodiacale di Giuliano, oppure ad *Apis/toro*

[54] Chialà 2014, 69. Cf. anche Ponso 2011, 6.
[55] Brock 1999,81. Cf. Ponso 2011, 14.
[56] *Jul. I,* 16-17. Lieu 1989, 108.

emblema di prosperità ovvero se costituisca un richiamo al vitello d'oro che gli abitanti d'Israele furono spinti a adorare.[57] Come sottolineato da Griffith, Efrem ha dedicato quattro stanze alle monete con il *tipo del toro* e ciò potrebbe indurre a pensare che il grande teologo abbia voluto richiamarsi esplicitamente al vitello fuso nel deserto – segno di apostasia –, raccontato nell'Esodo, e al re Geroboamo che fece realizzare due vitelli d'oro a Betel e Dan,[58] per schernire gli Ebrei sostenuti da Giuliano.[59] Il primo *Inno* si conclude con un interessante parallelismo tra il re di Babilonia Nabucodonosor e il *re di Grecia*, ossia Giuliano, dove Grecia indica verosimilmente l'*oikoumène* classico, nel suo complesso. Il primo, che secondo le scritture ebraiche impazzì iniziando a mangiare erba come i buoi, viene presentato per dimostrare la potenza del giudizio di Dio che «lo ha fatto vagare affinché potesse tornare alla normalità»,[60] mentre il secondo, che «irritò Dio e respinse Daniele»,[61] viene giudicato colpevole e condannato senza possibilità di redenzione. Nel testo efremiano, anche come prova di una matura coscienza politica dell'autore, sono numerosi i riferimenti puntuali alla vita di Giuliano, ad una certa recrudescenza del paganesimo e del giudaismo, che si evince dal destino delle due città Nisibi e Gerusalemme, e alla forza di una chiesa che resiste all'urto. L'allusione al libro di Daniele è notevole, in quanto «ai suoi tempi era diventato la fonte dell'escatologia storica cristiana.»[62] Secondo i commentari biblici attribuiti ad Efrem, dove Giuliano viene assimilato al nuovo Alessandro, nel libro di Daniele si sottende al sovrano macedone sia nella profezia del quarto regno sia dove il *re di Grecia* viene chiamato *caprone*;[63] entrambi riecheggiano largamente nel primo *Inno contro Giuliano.*

[57] *Ibid.,* nt. 19.

[58] Griffith 1987, 244-253. Es. 32, 1-8 e Re. 12, 26-32.

[59] Ivi, 254

[60] «lo fece impazzire, perché potesse tornare in sé», *Jul. I,* 20.

[61] *Jul. I,* 20.

[62] Griffith 1987, 244-251.

[63] *Ibid.* Riguardo alla profezia, cap. 2, 40 «un quarto regno forte come il ferro»; circa la visione del caprone, cap. 8, 21 "*il caprone è il re di Grecia"*.

2. II Inno contro Giuliano

Nel secondo *Inno contro Giuliano*, ancora una volta, viene scelta da Efrem un'immagine dal sapore esopico, già sfruttata per simboleggiare la violazione dell'unità della chiesa: il *lupo-Giuliano*, l'eretico, si è travestito con l'abito dell'agnello; tutt'intorno un gregge smarrito di *pecore*, i cristiani, si affianca alle *capre* che rappresentano gli eretici, in evidente connessione con il concetto di *capro espiatorio* simbolo del peccato.[64] Quindi, nel testo, Il *lupo Giuliano* assume anche la "veste" dell'eretico, quasi a volerne aumentare ancora la valenza negativa, aggiungendo un ulteriore errore, l'eresia, al terrificante errore di base, l'apostasia. Giuliano vi è definito *caldeo/ profeta*, *re/ sacerdote*, sostenitore dei seguaci del culto di Baal, in un'impressionante sequela lessicale di tipo denigratorio. Si tratta di abilità linguistiche che, per un maggior intendimento delle genuine intenzioni del poeta, vanno accostate al procedimento per antitesi tipico dello stile efremiano[65] e all'insistenza "al vetriolo" rivolta al paganesimo e ai suoi sostenitori quali indovini, astrologi e negromanti che cercano di raggiungere l'*alètheia* tramite la teurgia e le pratiche magiche, anziché ricercarla nella meditazione e nella spiritualità.[66] La lettura del secondo *Inno* ci offre altri esempi suggestivi, fra i quali annoveriamo quello della *capra* e quello del *nazirita*, un ebreo che ha fatto voto di non bere e di non tagliarsi la barba, entrambi funzionali alla rappresentazione dell'Apostata.[67] Infatti, Giuliano viene qui definito *he-goat* /capro (ܬܝܫܐ),[68] alludendo alla barba lunga del *nazirita*, con evidente richiamo alla visione narrata nel libro di Daniele «il caprone è il re di Grecia.»[69] Inoltre, il *ferro duro* con cui il *buono* distrugge il vitello va riferito a Mosè, personaggio biblico, che usa la *lancia del paradiso* (ܪܘܡܚܐ) per uccidere

[64] Murray 2006, 66. A proposito dei lupi, simbolo di eretici e Giudei, cf. ivi, 191.
[65] *Jul. I,* 2-I, 3. Lieu 1989, 110.
[66] *Ibid. Jul I,* 3-4.
[67] *Jul. II,* 5. Lieu 1989, 111.
[68] Ivi, 112. *Jul. II* 9.
[69] Griffith 1987, 251-254. Dan. 8,21.

l'imperatore apostata che aveva deriso il Cristo:[70] secondo una suggestiva ricostruzione questo potrebbe addirittura alludere alla fede cristiana del vendicatore/omicida.[71] Dodici stanze dell'*Inno* sono dedicate alla cessione di Nisibi ai Persiani da parte di Gioviano, dove l'umiliazione di una disfatta politica viene trasformata nel simbolo più alto della sconfitta del paganesimo, rendendo dignità all'imperatore battuto.[72] In questo gioco di ruoli, che trasforma la realtà storica attraverso il simbolo, restituendoci comunque il prezioso punto di vista del dottore siro, la colpa è sempre di Giuliano, anzi del paganesimo di Giuliano, e l'*Inno* secondo si conclude con parole chiare:

> Mentre il nostro re era un sacerdote pagano che disonorava le nostre chiese
> il re magio ha onorato le nostre chiese.[73]

2.1 Ammiano e il "suo" Giuliano

Il lessico impiegato da Efrem per tratteggiare la figura dell'imperatore apostata e che va inquadrato all'interno di una prospettiva bivalente, didattico-speculativa ma non priva di intenti chiaramente denigratori nei confronti di Giuliano, è stata accostata all'opera coeva di Gregorio di Nazianzo,[74] evidenziandone convergenze e difformità. Tuttavia, si tratta del punto di vista di due cristiani, secondo un autorevole studio accomunati da una medesima figliolanza ellenistica ma divisi dagli obiettivi finali.[75] Diversamente, il parallelismo che offre la lettura attenta di alcuni passi dell'opera di Ammiano Marcellino, storico

[70] Ivi, 255.
[71] *Ibid.*
[72] Ivi, 256.
[73] *Jul. II,* 27. Trad. dell'autrice. Cf. Lieu 1989, 117.
[74] *Or.* 5. Cf. Chiaradonna – Noce – Tavolieri 2016, 502-505.
[75] Riguardo a questo aspetto è molto interessante il dibattito sorto sulla mancata ellenizzazione di Efrem, cui si è opposto Brock (1982, 19), che invece ritiene impossibile postulare che Efrem fosse completamente scevro da contatti con il mondo ellenistico. Con particolare riferimento agli aspetti storici e culturali, il tema è stato trattato da Elm 2012.

pagano contemporaneo dei due dottori cristiani e proveniente da quel contesto culturale in cui si intersecavano con efficacia la tradizione ellenofona e quella sirofona, costituisce un esempio lampante da contrapporre all'audacia del lessico impiegato da Efrem in questo caso, che attinge a un simbolismo drammatizzato di origine mesopotamica.[76] Il risultato è il rovesciamento esatto di ciascuna delle prerogative che lo storico antiocheno attribuisce con entusiasmo a Giuliano:

> Di certo fu un uomo da annoverare fra gli spiriti eroici, grande per la gloria delle sue imprese e la sua innata maestà. Essendoci, come dicono i filosofi, quattro virtù principali, la temperanza, la saggezza, la giustizia e la forza, e alle quali si aggiungono dall'esterno le altre, la conoscenza dell'arte della guerra, l'autorevolezza, la fortuna, la generosità, egli le coltivò tutte, una per una, con grande zelo.[77]
>
> Della sua saggezza numerosissime furono le prove, di cui basterà ricordarne poche: espertissimo di arte militare e giuridica, incline straordinariamente alla cortesia, reclamava per sé solo quanto bastava a evitare il disprezzo e l'insolenza. Era più anziano per virtù che per età. Studiava attentamente ogni causa e talvolta era giudice inflessibile; severissimo censore dei costumi; tranquillo disprezzatore delle ricchezze, guardava dall'alto in basso tutte le cose mortali: diceva che per il saggio era una vergogna, possedendo un'anima, cercare gloria con il corpo.[78]
>
> Molti e noti esempi mostrano la sua competenza nell'arte militare: assedi di città e fortezze al colmo dei pericoli, schieramenti composti in varie forme, accampamenti progettati in maniera

[76] Chiaradonna – Noce – Tavolieri 2016, 503.

[77] Trad. dell'autrice. Amm. Marc. XXV 4, 1: *Vir profecto heroicis connumerandus ingeniis, claritudine rerum et coalita maiestate conspicuus. Cum enim sint, ut sapientes definiunt, virtutes quattuor praecipuae, temperantia, prudentia, iustitia, fortitudo eisque accedentes extrinsecus aliae, scientia rei militaris, auctoritas, felicitas atque liberalitas, intento studio coluit omnes ut singulas.*

[78] Tard. dell'autrice. Amm. Marc. XXV 4, 7: *Dein prudentiae eius indicia fuere vel plurima, e quibus explicari sufficiet pauca. Armatae rei scientissimus et togatae, civilitati admodum studens, tantum sibi arrogans, quantum a contemptu et insolentia distare existimabat. Virtute senior quam aetate; studiosus cognitionum omnium et indeclinabilis aliquotiens iudex; censor in moribus regendis acerrimus, placidus opum contemptor, mortalia cuncta despiciens, postremo id praedicabat turpe esse sapienti, cum habeat animum, captare laudes ex corpore.*

> prudente e salubre, guardie di frontiera e di campagna disposte in sicurezza.[79]

Come appare evidente il *lupo-Giuliano*, descritto con indubbia abilità lessicale dal dottore siro nei suoi inni, è in realtà il prodotto raffinato e graffiante della polemica efremiana che sembra quasi cogliere dal novero delle virtù elencate con dovizia di particolari da Ammiano, nel solco della tradizione storiografica romana dove uno spazio importante è riservato alla ritrattistica, assegnandogli con inesorabile lucidità il corrispondente negativo. Sicché la mirabile sequenza esposta dallo storico antiocheno, «*temperantia, prudentia, iustitia, fortitudo, scientia rei militaris, auctoritas, felicitas atque liberalitas*» e altre ancora, attraverso la scelta e l'uso di un lessico della discordia, sapientemente selezionato, si trasforma in Efrem nell'impietoso elenco di vizi, difetti e immonde inclinazioni che trova la sua sintesi migliore proprio nella simbologia del *lupo*, tradizionalmente ritenuto dalla sensibilità comune, animale famelico e sfuggente.

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[79] Trad. dell'autrice. Amm. Marc. XXV 4, 11: *Castrensium negotiorum scientiam plura declarant et nota, civitatum oppugnationes et castellorum inter ipsos discriminum vertices, acies figura multiformi compositae, salubriter et caute castra metata, praetenturae stationesque agrariae totis rationibus ordinatae.*

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Arabic Studies

Science and Gnosis, Masters and Pupils in the Risāla al-Jāmiʿa

Carmela Baffioni

This paper illustrates the master-disciple relationship in the *Risāla al-Jāmiʿa*, the 'crown' of the *Epistles* of the Iḫwān al-Ṣafāʾ (the Brethren of Purity) in Mourad Kacimi' s new edition, with special regard to the introductory section and the section on the 'propaedeutic sciences.' The *Jāmiʿa* teaches a secret science through a rigorous demonstration procedure based on the esoteric interpretation of the Qurʾan. Beyond the possibility that it was written by the authors of the epistles themselves, the *Jāmiʿa* reveals common points with Epistle 50, which I have assumed to be its first core. Content, methods, and the secrecy pact required of learners show that the *Jāmiʿa* contains the science of imams. If the teachers cannot but have limited knowledge in comparison with divine knowledge, some passages allow us to claim that the imam may be precisely the mysterious addressee of Epistle 50, who arrived in secret to the Brethren after long and arduous travels.

Keywords: Esotericism – Iḫwān al-Ṣafāʾ – *al-Risāla al-Jāmiʿa* – *taʾwīl* – *taʿlīm* 'teaching'

1. Introduction

The present paper stems from ongoing research: my English translation with commentary of the new critical edition of the *Risāla al-Jāmiʿa*, prepared by Mourad Kacimi for The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London. In the impossibility of producing anything pertaining to the main fields of study of the dedicatee of this volume, by dealing with knowledge and learning in the *Jāmiʿa*

I wish to pay tribute to his multifaceted activity as a teacher, which he conducted not only with exceptional competence but with great passion.

In the titling of many manuscripts, the *Jāmiʿa* is referred to as the 'crown' of the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity (Iḫwān al-Ṣafāʾ), in that it is supposed to provide their esoteric meaning. In contrast to the *Epistles* (the oldest encyclopaedia of sciences in the medieval world), scholars generally agree that the *Jāmiʿa* has an Ismaili character.

My topic is also crucial to the key issues regarding the *Jāmiʿa* that have been addressed so far: that of authorship and dating, which, just as with the Iḫwān al-Ṣafāʾ's encyclopaedia, are the same. Still like the encyclopaedia, the work is anonymous,[1] perhaps because of the author's – or the authors' – [2] Ismaili faith

[1] Anonymity and secrecy in the Iḫwān al-Ṣafāʾ can be explained by their opposition to the regime in force (e.g., Kacimi 2016); but the question is related to the dating that one chooses to take in for the *Epistles*. As for the author(s) of the *Risāla al-Jāmiʿa*, they could not declare their identity because they consider themselves to be rather transmitters, though appealing to anyone wishes to follow them (Kacimi 2019, 2).

[2] Apart from the ascription of the litterateur Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 1023, after Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī al-Manṭiqī, d. ca. 985) and the muʿtazili theologian ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Hamaḏānī (d. 1025) to three personages related to the Basra chancery secretary Zayd b. Rifāʿa (Stern 1946; 1964), scholars consider the encyclopaedia to be the result of editing layered over the centuries. In more recent times, however, after the seminal Fierro 1996, the transmitter of the *Epistles* in Spain is identified with the traditionist and esotericist Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī al-Majrīṭī (de Callataÿ 2013, Kacimi 2014, de Callataÿ – Moureau 2015). He had been previously confused with the scientist Maslama al-Majrīṭī (d. 1007), to whom part of the manuscript tradition ascribes the *Jāmiʿa*. Since Maslama al-Qūrṭubī died in 964, the dating of the *Epistles* is anticipated by several decades. Subsequently, the ancient attribution has been cast into doubt (de Callataÿ 2014). Maslama al-Qūrṭubī was then also recognised as the author of the *Rutbat al-ḥakīm* ('The Degree of the Wise') and the *Ġāyat al-ḥakīm* ('The Goal of the Wise', known in Latin as *Picatrix*), two important writings devoted to alchemy and magic, respectively, which are thus both dated to the first half of the 10th century. Scholars have emphasised the impact of the encyclopaedia on the *Rutba* and the *Ġāya*, and it has even been suggested that Maslama cooperated in the writing of the epistles (e.g., Madelung 2018). Whether the author of the *Jāmiʿa* is one or more depends on the possibility of its ascription to the author, or the authors, of the *Epistles* at some point in their writing. Hence also the importance of the dating issue.

that is not, however, universally acknowledged to the Brethren of Purity.

Through the learning of philology and languages, ancient and modern, Riccardo Contini's students were raised to the summit of knowledge: that of the soul(s)/'self' of the peoples who spoke, or speak, such languages. *Taʿlīm* 'teaching' is a cornerstone of the *Jāmiʿa*: those who study it receive knowledge of the secret language of the Holy Book, that is, without being blasphemous, the knowledge of the soul/the 'self' of God as it has been revealed in the book of Nature – investigated in the encyclopaedia – and in the 'descended' Qurʾan. Through this Book, the *Jāmiʿa* comments on the book of Nature, so becoming itself a path to salvation.

Since the science-gnosis pair invests truths of faith supported by an esoteric interpretation of the Qurʾan, the communication of knowledge primarily concerns the science of the imam. It is perhaps for this reason that later Ismaili authors ascribed the *Jāmiʿa* to the second *imām mastūr*,[3] Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 840). Based only on its eminently religious character, scholars consider such a hypothesis to be without foundation,[4] but the imam's influence pervades the entire work.

2. *Teaching and Esotericism*

I will illustrate the two aspects of teaching and esotericism, paying special attention to the first two parts of the *Jāmiʿa*, the introductory section and the section devoted to the 'propaedeutic sciences' of the encyclopaedia.[5]

[3] *Mastūr*, 'hidden', literally 'veiled', indicates the state of a true imam when he is replaced by a representative during a period called *dawr al-satr* ('Cycle of Occultation', on which see infra, note 17), and his return is expected as the *mahdī* ('the rightly guided one') or *qāʾim* ('he who arises').

[4] e.g., De Smet 2017, 155 and 157; Kacimi 2019, 359.

[5] The translations provided, on which my interpretations depend, are based on Kacimi's new edition contained in the first volume of the *Jāmiʿa* in print by The Institute of Ismaili Studies. In anticipation of this publication, I indicate the corresponding pages and lines of Muṣṭafā Ghālib's edition (henceforth: Gh), so as to allow the reader a comparison, albeit limited, with an Arabic original.

At the beginning of the book, the author(s) repeat – as does the encyclopaedia – that learning must be gradual and follow a pre-established order of sciences, which are therefore a «ladder for salvation, and a treasure for the virtuous» (cf. p. 17.16 Gh).

The first epistles of the encyclopaedia – the mathematical and the propaedeutic – contain all other knowledge in themselves in potentiality. As for the *Jāmiʿa*, it contains all sciences in actuality, and is therefore the seal of the *Epistles*:

> for that [reason], we have also said that this epistle [is] the epistle of the demonstrations, and [that] it [is] the completion and the seal [of our doctrine]. And as the seal of something is only at its end, so it is necessary that the form of completion – namely, the end – is obtained thanks to the things that precede it in potentiality and later occur in actuality (cf. p. 71.10-13 Gh).[6]

In the book's opening, the author(s) announce that they will deal with «[a part] of the hidden science and the well-stored aspects of wisdom… [that] assemble numerous doors, from each of which many [other] doors open – that [are] the doors of Paradise» (cf. p. 16.6-8 Gh). This statement, placed not surprisingly in a strategic position, brings to mind a well-known saying attributed to the Prophet and concerning ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib: «I am the city of knowledge and ʿAlī is its gate.» The saying is also quoted in the encyclopaedia[7] to emphasise the 'philosophical' role (in a very particular sense) frequently ascribed to Muhammad in esoteric literature.[8] The theme of the doors – which open for the learners

[6] «Since we have only been able to give clear expression to the speech [made] in this chapter… through the hint[s], symbol[s] and allusion[s used] in the preceding epistles; [and since] we have mentioned in them the premises of what we wish to mention and clarify through demonstration in this epistle… as it was, in what precedes, in potentiality, and in this place [it is] like an actualisation… [F]or that [reason] we have also said that this epistle [is] the epistle of the demonstrations, and [that] it [is] the completion and the seal [of our doctrine]» (cf. p. 71.5-11 Gh).

[7] Hamdani – Soufan 2019, 33, note 139. Hamdani refers to Bustānī 1957, IV: 460. Cf. my Introduction to Epistle 50 in Madelung et al. 2019, 136, note 57, and the explanations in De Smet 1995, 16-18.

[8] Marquet 1973, 483.

but remain locked to those unworthy of esoteric knowledge – is one of the *leitmotifs* of the *Jāmiʿa*.[9]

The author(s) repeatedly declare their intention to resort to rigorous rational demonstrations,[10] and certainly to such intention are to be related the countless references to the ancient. These are also proper of the encyclopaedia, but here they are significant with respect to those who see an anti-Abbasid and anti-classical intent of the author of the *Jāmiʿa*, when they recognise him in Imam Aḥmad. Aḥmad is said to have undertaken the writing of the *Epistles*, containing the true philosophy taught by the imams, in order to counter the project of destruction of Islam that the Abbasid caliph al-Maʾmūn had set into motion through the translation of the works of the ancient pagans. There existed, in fact, a 'sound' philosophy of the imams, a 'revealed' philosophy situated at the very heart of Ismailism, as opposed to the 'unholy' philosophy promoted by the Abbasids. The *Epistles* of the Iḫwān al-Ṣafāʾ and the *Jāmiʿa* would have been an integral part of that project.[11]

At the same time, Mourad Kacimi has repeatedly pointed out how the author(s) of the *Jāmiʿa* intend to explain hidden truths[12] through an esoteric interpretation of the Qurʾan.[13] The esotericism of the text requires the exposition to follow «the

[9] «But for you we have opened one only of its doors and have made unveiling its screen easy for you» (cf. p. 66.6 Gh).

[10] «And as we have imposed as a condition… the elucidation of the procedure» (cf. p. 84.15-18 Gh); «…[W]e have we have made it [our] obligation to explain in this epistle [= the *Comprehensive Epistle*] what we had [merely] intimated in the others. We have set it as the epistle of demonstrations» (cf. p. 105.1-2 Gh). However, Mattila 2021, 470 does not seem to agree with the rational approach of the *Jāmiʿa*.

[11] De Smet 2017, 164.

[12] What precisely they consist of is explained in the following passage: «the knowledge of what was and of that which will be, and [of] what was, concerning His creation, through His light and majesty to which no attribute [can] be applied that appears by way of innovation» (cf. p. 19.18-19 Gh).

[13] Kacimi 2019, 372, note 67 recalls that the Ismailis consider even the *Epistles* as a Qurʾan beyond the Qurʾan.

method of allusion through the clearest sign and expression» (cf. pp. 36.16-37.1 Gh).[14]

3. In the Light of the Qurʾan

The relevance of the Qurʾan in the general context of the *Jāmiʿa* is expressed at its beginning, where the author(s) state that its contents collect

> the words of Revelation and the solid meanings of the esoteric interpretation that prophets and messengers have received from the guardian angels and the angels nearest to God and that the rightly-guided imams and the caliphs endowed with true faith have transmitted to the gnostic believers. Their beginning belongs to what the lofty Pen had traced in the honoured Tablet (cf. p. 16.9-12 Gh).

Here, the expression «caliphs endowed with true faith» seems to be synonymous with the previous one, «rightly-guided imams.» The *Jāmiʿa* is a path to the correct understanding of the Sacred Text in its double dimension: exoteric and esoteric.

Experimental/demonstrative knowledge and prophetic knowledge proceed together. The author(s) state that the contents of the divine books are

> the news about the beginning of creation, the start of growth, the aggregation of the compound [beings], the creation of the mothers,[15] the origination from the Creator… of the high and the low world, the invention of the [various] kinds of creatures that [are] in them, of the terrestrial species among the spiritual and physical substances, the way of their annihilation, the description of the day of congregation [of the dead], of resurrection, of return, and of the requital in terms of reward and punishment, felicity and torment (cf. pp. 33.15-34.1 Gh).

[14] «We have imposed upon ourselves as an obligation to present in this epistle [= the *Comprehensive Epistle*] what undoubtfully [is needed] for him who wishes to be informed about the secrets of the hidden sciences and the symbols of the religious Laws, which those endowed with understanding cannot do without…» (cf. p. 126.6-8 Gh).

[15] I.e., of the elements.

This description mirrors exactly the contents of the encyclopaedia – the book of Nature, and eschatology. Concepts such as the creative *kun*,[16] the natural world, and the world of the hereafter find in the *Jāmiʿa* their esoteric counterpart:

> the fundaments of religion and the true natures of knowledge… [consist in] the knowledge of God…, [in] the acknowledgement of His godship, [in] the knowledge of the first [thing] that He originated, and of what proceeded from His origination, [in] the knowledge of the Cycle of Unveiling at the apparition of the Intellect to the Soul, and of her reception from him of the [divine] emanation and generosity, [in] the knowledge of the Cycle of Occultation and of the arrival of knowledge at the particular souls through the sensible instruments, the theoretical allusions, and the commanded [acts of] worship, and [, finally, in] the knowledge of Adam… [and] Iblīs (cf. pp. 126.17-127.4 Gh).[17]

Teachers and learners are religious esotericists: those who do not attain such knowledge «would not be among the devoted servants of God» (cf. p. 127.5-6 Gh). The *Jāmiʿa* gathers sciences all together and replaces them all. But the author(s) wish to weld the

[16] Such might be the literal meaning of the words «the beginning of creation» in the abovementioned passage, with immediate reference to the letter of the Holy Book.

[17] The story of Adam and Iblīs is another of the *leitmotifs* of the *Jāmiʿa*. As for the 'Cycle of Occultation' here mentioned, according to the earliest Ismaili doctrine, history is composed of seven *adwār* of seven 'speaking' (*nāṭiq*) prophets, each of whom reveals a new religious law (*šarīʿa*): Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and the *mahdī* or *qāʾim*. Each *nāṭiq* has his trustee (*waṣī*) who reveals the inner (*bāṭin*) meaning of the respective *šarīʿa*. The seventh *nāṭiq*, the *qāʾim*, will abrogate the *šarīʿa* of Muhammad and restore the pure *tawḥīd* (i.e., the act of believing and affirming that God is one and unique, *wāḥid*; Gimaret 2000) of the times before Adam's fall. The whole cycle from Adam to the *qāʾim* is called *dawr al-satr* (the 'Cycle of Occultation') because knowledge is concealed by the outward (*ẓāhir*) law. Before the coming of the *qāʾim* the *bāṭin* must be kept secret and can be revealed to the neophyte only upon his swearing an oath of initiation with a vow of secrecy and on payment of a due. Before the *dawr al-satr* there was a period of manifestation called *dawr al-kašf* (the 'Cycle of Unveiling') during which the pure *tawḥīd* was in force. At the end of time, the *qāʾim* will bring forth a new *dawr al-kašf* (Halm 2004).

contents of the Sacred Book with those of the *Jāmiʿa* (and with those of the *Epistles*):

> we have put before you in this book that in which [there is] admonition, remembrance, and direction for the righteous, *Who bear in mind the certainty that they are to meet their Lord and that they are to return to Him* [Q 2:46].[18] So, take what we have provided to you of the mercy [that] God… conferred upon us, *and "be of those who give thanks* [Q 7:144], *but say, 'O my Lord! advance me in knowledge'* [Q 20:114]. Indeed, we [are those] who say, *of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you, (O men!)* [Q 17:85], *but over all endued with knowledge is One, the All-Knowing* [Q 12:76]" (cf. p. 31.4-9 Gh).

4. Which Masters? Which Disciples?

The *Jāmiʿa* seems to provide more indications as to its author(s) and those of the encyclopaedia. For example, we read:

> This book [*al-faṣl*] … [is] obscure [and] subtle. Its exterior [side is] a revered science. Its interior [side is] a magnificent secret, veiled [and] hidden, [a secret] only reached by those endowed with intellectual vision, exercised in the rational sciences, helped by the lordly endorsements put before them by angels, … by the Holy Spirit, and by that which was brought in the revealed books (cf. pp. 65.14-66.2 Gh).

The strict connection of the *Jāmiʿa* with the encyclopaedia is again stated at the end of the introductory part, where the author(s) explain the choice of the title. They claim that «we have had to collect in it the meanings of the speech with a summarised discourse and an abridged description, and to explain in it that we have found lacking in the other epistles preceding this one» (cf. p. 91.3-4 Gh). The *Jāmiʿa* will be «equal in weight to the epistles that preceded it and were antecedent with respect to it, though it contains more true demonstrations and right judgments that [may] bear witness to its soundness and establish its proof»

[18] I quote from Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation available online at https://quranyusufali.com/.

(cf. p. 91.11-13 Gh). This means that in each epistle a particular scientific theme was addressed, and in the *Jāmiʿa* its purpose is explained in the corresponding chapter, expressed «in the form of symbols» (cf. p. 91.7 Gh).

Understood literally, the passage would seem to prove that the writer(s) are the same as the authors of the encyclopaedia, or, at least, that the version of the *Jāmiʿa* now available is built in such a way as to lead the reader to believe so. This, however, does not exclude different authors, especially as in another concluding chapter, the one at the end of the exposition of the true meaning of the propaedeutic sciences, the author(s) refer to «us and others among our predecessors» (cf. p. 143.10 Gh), which would open the way to assume a stratified composition not only for the encyclopaedia, but for the *Jāmiʿa* as well. The author(s) of the *Jāmiʿa* refer not only to epistles, but to other books written by them (cf. p. 65.10 Gh).

However, the fact that the passages examined so far contain expressions undeniably resembling some of the formulations in the encyclopaedia, though relevant, is not decisive to conclude in favour of the identity of the author(s) of the *Jāmiʿa* and the *Epistles*. Nothing could have prevented different persons from copying more or less *verbatim* interjections or passages from the encyclopaedia in such a way as to be passed off as who they were not.

In the abovementioned passage, the *Jāmiʿa* is indicated by the word *faṣl* (lit: chapter). This brings to mind a passage from Epistle 50, in which the same terminological choice recurs:

> …[W]e have called this chapter in this epistle the 'compendium' [*al-faṣl al-jāmiʿ*] of all the advantages in our epistles, [epistles that are also] comprehensive of all the beneficial branches [of knowledge]. It [= this chapter] is, with respect to them [= the epistles], like the heart [is] to the body and [like] the head [is] to the torso, and it is the conclusion of the purpose after all the aforementioned [epistles], the expression of everything we have depicted, and the summary of what we have described.[19]

[19] Madelung et al. 2019, 234-235; cf. note 243.

I have already hypothesised that Epistle 50 was the first version of the *Jāmiʿa*,[20] and this appears confirmed by the prologue of the epistle, which seems to allude precisely to the function of the work:

> …[W]e have placed [*jaʿalnā*] in each epistle of ours a chapter we have set as their quintessence; therefore he who understands it and puts it into operation will be successful in achieving happiness in this world and in the hereafter… we have called it 'the comprehensive chapter', because it brings together the most sublime [kinds of] happiness and [the highest] advantages… we order you to preserve and protect it.[21]

And in the *Jāmiʿa* we read:

> …[A]s we have imposed upon ourselves as an obligation to set out in this epistle [= the *Comprehensive Epistle*] of ours those [issues that] we have veiled in the other…, since this *Comprehensive Epistle* has been [written] for the purposes we have aimed at (cf. p. 119.1-4 Gh).

5. The Relationship with the Imam

The *Jāmiʿa* frequently mentions the pact of secrecy demanded of learners. They must preserve the work «as a real treasure» (cf. p. 19.12 Gh), by only allowing it to be approached by those who are worthy. In one of these passages, we read that the same covenant will be imposed on other learners in an unbroken chain, under the threat of damnation of those who open and reveal, and of those who unworthily learn, «until you arrive at the one whom God… wished, and makes manifest to them him who He wants among His servants» (cf. p. 23.8-9 Gh).

These words mark the moment when the communication process between master and disciple ends, and refer to two persons chosen by God. The first has the task of making the

[20] *Ibid.*, 215.
[21] *Ibid.*, 193-194.

second one recognisable. Both are certainly not ordinary people, however learned: they must have an absolutely peculiar religious characterisation.

Let us try adding more data to this issue. I have extensively illustrated the enigmatic figure of the addressee in Epistle 50:[22] he is endowed with rational knowledge, spiritual maturity, and an 'ascetic' attitude during tiresome travels. God shed on him His light. Therefore, he is no longer under the yoke of the darkness of oppression that troubles his time. He has made every effort at joining the Brethren, who represent him as one who strikes fire with a flint in a dark and windy night: he possesses the gnosis thanks to which he detects the hidden tracks of the right path, while the majority of people are attempting at extinguishing the light of God on earth, to make the proof of God (*ḥujjat Allāh*) disappear. The initiate also reveals himself as an announcer of the forthcoming revival of the Brotherhood and of the disclosure of their 'secret'. Thus, the Brethren give him shelter. I speculate that the mysterious recipient is himself this *ḥujja*, made manifest by a second individual, the *dalīl* ('indication'), thanks to the light that surrounds him. The lines quoted above may confirm this interpretation.

What about the other possibility, that his travels in solitude and among a great many difficulties identify the addressee precisely with the *imām mastūr*? Although they are 'chosen ones', the authors of the *Jāmiʿa* recognise the limited nature of their knowledge: «Know that we do not embrace the totality of sciences in a universal way, since that is an attribute [proper only to] the One Who possesses the Creation and the Imperative» (cf. p. 37.9-10 Gh). Therefore, knowledge is a gift from God that implies surrender to Him, even with regard to the measure of what He dispenses from time to time to His creatures. The Active Intellect, too, surrenders to God «by faith and submission» (p. 28.15 Gh) when he acknowledges His absolute unicity and uniqueness, thus displaying the highest form of knowledge. The *Jāmiʿa* is

[22] Cf. *ibid.*, 128-130 and 143-147 (Introduction) and 193-199 (translation).

> the key [capable of opening] what has been locked, and the cleft [apt to free] what has been sewn up… the science of the wise men and the most learned that we have conveyed in the measure of our ability and the extent of our endeavour, and [for] which God… enabled us with His graciousness (cf. p. 37.2-6 Gh).

These passages confirm that the *Jāmiʿa* contains the body of knowledge of the imam's intimates, who teach advanced initiates. As for the imam, regardless of the chronology one may opt for, he is certainly hidden: apart from the ancient periods of *satr* of the Ismaili imams, the concealment (*ġayba*)[23] of the last imam of the Twelvers dates back to 260/874. Though the meaning that the author(s) of the *Jāmiʿa* (and, probably, the Iḫwān al-Ṣafāʾ) attribute to the expected imam may vary, this could explain why, as in the encyclopaedia, the author(s) of the *Jāmiʿa* refrain from making their identity explicit. Whatever the time when the *Epistles* and the *Jāmiʿa* were written, it must have been a moment when the identity of the hidden imam had not yet been clarified.

The author(s) of the *Jāmiʿa* appear to act as the hidden imam's representatives. Despite the rigorous demonstrative method, only those who conform to the morals of the wise can understand it, whereas «it passes unheeded by those who steer clear from following the imams» (cf. p. 91.8-9 Gh). The passage mentioned on p. 294 contains a reference to the Holy Spirit, which is helpful in this regard. Another reference appears in a passage of the section on the natural sciences, which is very similar in terminology:

> This, O my brother, [is] an obscure science and a subtle secret, the exterior [side] of which [is] a pretty meadow, and its interior [side is] a deep sea, the secret of which one [can] hardly apprise, and the full comprehension of its goodness [does belong] only to the learned

[23] The Ismaili concept of *satr* should not be confused with the doctrine of *ġayba* among the Twelver Šiʿis. As noted by Seyyed H. Nasr, *satr* implies simply being hidden from the eyes of the crowd and from public notice, while *ġayba* indicates disappearance from the physical world. Cf. Mumtaz Ali Tajddin, "Dawr-i satr", *Encyclopaedia of Ismailism*, http://heritage.ismaili.net/node/10283 (accessed 3 May 2024).

> firm in science, those who seek information about the secrets of creation, in that of which their pure souls are satisfied, through the philosophical, divine sciences, through the help of noble individuals who have received the endorsements of the Intellect thanks to the mediation of the holy Soul, as He said, praise Him, *With it came down The Spirit of Faith and Truth— / To thy heart and mind, That thou mayest admonish / In the perspicuous Arabic tongue* [Q 26:193-195]. So be it clear to you, O my brother…, what we have put before you of this hidden science and well-stored secret that only the pure [are allowed to] touch (p. 154.7-14 Gh).

Despite the similarities, an important notation is added here: the learner who has covered the entire curriculum of the sciences is ready to acquire the secret science together with the *rāsikhūna fīʾl-ʿilm* ('those who are firmly grounded in knowledge') mentioned in Qurʾan 3:7.[24] In the Šiʿi and Ismaili interpretation, these are the imams, who are pure (*al-muṭahharūna*) and receive help from what is now called *al-nafs al-qudsiyya*, 'the Holy Soul'. As clarified by the Qurʾanic quotation, this Soul coincides with the Spirit (and, in the philosophical perspective of the *Jāmiʿa*, with the Active Intellect). The true master then, as in the tradition that ascribes the *Jāmiʿa* to Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh, is indeed the hidden imam, perhaps the one foreshadowed in Epistle 50.*

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[24] On the relationship between the well-known interpretation given of the verse by Averroes and the perspective of the Iḫwān al-Ṣafāʾ see Baffioni 2006.

* The first volume of the new edition of the *Risāla al-Jāmiʿa* by Mourad Kacimi, with my English translation (see note 5), has now been published (see Bibliography). All references in this article to the Ghālib edition will be readily located in the volume, as the translation indicates the pages of all three extant editions: Jamīl Ṣalībā (1949), Muṣṭafā Ghālib (1984) and Mourad Kacimi (2025).

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Bayān, *Exegesis and Ethnicity: the Case of al-Zamaḫšarī* [1]

ANTONELLA GHERSETTI

This contribution aims to provide an insight into the function of Arabic (and Arabic grammar) in terms of identitarian and ideological construction through a close reading of selected texts by al-Zamaḫšarī (d. 1144), an outstanding figure of the pre-modern Islamic world and a celebrated grammarian and philologist. Although he is best known for *al-Kaššāf*, a much admired – albeit controversial – commentary on the Qurʾān, he is also famous for his fierce defence of the Arabs: despite his Persian origins, he served and promoted the Arabic language and fought hard against the partisans of the *šuʿūbiyya*. His approach to Arabic, examined here, aptly exemplifies the deep connection between language, religion and (ethnic) identity in the Arab intellectual tradition.

Keywords: al-Zamaḫšarī – Arabic language – Arabic grammar – *ʿArab* – *ʿAǧam* – ethnicity

In the premodern Arab-Islamic empire ethnicity-related matters had a privileged place to be discussed «in the field of ideas concerning language».[2] Discourses on language and ethnicity are intertwined, as it is well exemplified in the opposition *ʿArab*-*ʿAǧam* (*ʿAǧam* refers generically to non-Arabs, but is applied mostly to Persians),[3] where the linguistic interpretation of these words

[1] A first draft of this article was presented at the Colloquium *Conceptualising Literary History: Foundations of Arabic Literature*, Yale 16th–17th April 2010.

[2] Goldziher 1967-1971[1888-1890] b, 208.

[3] Gabrieli 1986; Bosworth 2011; Cooperson 2014.

seems to prevail over the ethnic one with the passing of time. Ayoub convincingly shows how the linguistic component led to understanding *ʿAǧam* as the antonym of "clear and eloquent" (*faṣīḥ*) thus obscuring the genealogical and ethnic denotation, and demonstrates that the linguistic acceptation, so intertwined with the notion of "alterity", in fact predates the ethnic one.[4] This is echoed in the meaning of *aʿǧamī* that al-Zamaḫšarī describes as «the one who does not speak a correct language and whose speech is not understandable, whatever his race may be».[5]

Arabic (*ʿarabiyya*), with different nuances and shifts, plays a crucial role in the construction and perception of Arabness.[6] The function of Arabic as an identitarian marker both in ethnic and religious terms is well-known, mostly under the form of the widespread opinion that grammar was born as a defence of pure Arabic from the corruption caused by Persians. The remarkable presence of non-Arabophones in linguistics studies seems to mirror the "original sin" (i.e. the corruption of Arabic) commonly attributed to the *ʿAǧam* exemplified by the sentence ascribed to the caliph ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (reigned 717 to 720) «the Persians should correct the grammar since they corrupted it».[7] Examples are numerous: starting from Sībawayh (d. 796), the "father" of Arabic grammar, the history of Arabic linguistics is teeming with grammarians who, though speaking a Persian dialect, devoted themselves to a fervent activity of study and defence of *ʿarabiyya*, like al-Zaǧǧāǧī (d. c. 949-50), Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī (d. 987), or ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Ǧurǧānī (d. 1078) and al-Sakkākī (d. 1229).[8] Though to a lesser degree, other ethnic groups were involved in this dynamic: Ibn Ǧinnī (d. 1002), the son of a Byzantine slave, probably suffered from his non-Arab stock in

[4] Ayoub 2006, 21-31; 36-38.

[5] al-Zamaḫšarī 1998, 5: 386. «People could acquire markers such as language and religion in such a way as to destabilize any rigid definition of such ethnonyms such as "Arab" and "Iranian" or "Persian"» (Cooperson 2014, 382).

[6] Webb 2016, 298 ff.

[7] al-Mubarrad 1956, 5.

[8] Guillaume 2000.

such a manner that he tried to redeem himself through his knowledge of Arabic[9] and a defence of its superiority and beauty.[10]

Al-Zamaḫšarī, whom Ibn Ḫaldūn mentions as an example of the relevance of *bayān* (lit. 'clarity', here to be intended as 'rhetoric') in the East,[11] seems to me a case in point. Despite his Persian descent, he is famous for his hostility against the Persophile supporters of the *šuʿūbiyya*, a position also taken by other non-Arabs, like Ibn Qutayba,[12] and represents an interesting example of how language attitudes are affected by religion and ethnic issues, in a way that Goldziher describes as «unconscious identification of Islam with Arabism».[13] After a presentation of al-Zamaḫšarī's profile, here I intend to offer a close reading and a few remarks on selected texts useful to give an insight into his view of Arabic and Arabic grammar in terms of identitarian and ideological construct.

Abū l-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar al-Zamaḫšarī, known as Ǧār Allāh "God's neighbour",[14] is an outstanding figure of the premodern Islamic world «relatively unstudied in Western academia».[15] Born at Zamakhshar (Khwarazm), the son of the imam of the local mosque, he moved to Djurdjaniyya, the capital of Khwarazm, where he died in 1144. He studied grammar, *adab*, lexicography, proverbs, rhetoric,[16] theology and *tafsīr* and travelled widely, visiting Bukhara, Khurasan, western Persia,

[9] Ibn Ǧinnī 1952-55, 1: 7, 36.

[10] *Ibid.*, 1: 47.

[11] "In general, the people of the East cultivate this discipline [*bayān*] more than the Maghribîs. […] we might say (the reason is that) the non-Arabs (Persians) [*al-ʿaǧam*] who constitute the majority of the population of the East occupy themselves with the Qur'ân commentary of az-Zamakhsharî, which is wholly based upon this discipline. […] This discipline [*bayān*] is needed most by Qur'ân commentators. Most ancient commentators disregarded it, until Jâr-Allâh az-Zamakhsharî appeared." (Ibn Ḫaldūn n.d., 610-611; Ibn Khaldûn 1967, 3: 337, 338). The perception of an "ethnic divide" in relation with linguistic sciences seems to be clear in the eyes of Mamluk scholars, especially in Egypt.

[12] Mottahedeh 1976, 179.

[13] Goldziher 1967-1971[1888-1890] b, 208.

[14] Versteegh 2002; Madelung 2004; Lane 2006, 9-47.

[15] Ally 2002, 318.

[16] Ḍayf [1976], 219-270; [1979], 283-287.

Baghdad, Arabia, Yemen, Damascus, Mecca. He penned grammar treatises, the most famous of which is *al-Mufaṣṣal fī ṣanʿat al-iʿrāb* (*The Detailed [Presentation] of the Art of Clear Speech*, in the translation by Lane 2006, henceforth *al-Mufaṣṣal*) also known as *al-Mufaṣṣal fī ʿilm al-ʿarabiyya*, or *al-Mufaṣṣal fī l-naḥw*,[17] and lexicographical works, like the bilingual Arabic-Persian dictionary *Muqaddimat al-adab* (*Introduction to Philology*), that contains an added Arabic grammar and a later Turkish part.[18] «Although of Persian origin, al-Zamakhsharī was most basically motivated in his scholarship to serve and promote the Arabic language»,[19] and bitterly fought the partisans of the *šuʿūbiyya*.

Biographers underline his great zeal in the linguistic sciences and his mastery of grammar, but also strongly criticise his open espousal and overt exhibition of *muʿtazilī* doctrine.[20] His affiliation with this creed is not anodyne: the *muʿtazila* had a strong bias to ground some of its tenets on textual analysis. To give an example, the delicate subject of divine attributes aroused many questions, which «were answered by linguistic analysis» to such an extent that the «doctrine of attributes is based not on metaphysics but on grammar».[21] The link between theology and linguistics of course is not unique to the *muʿtazila*: the *ẓāhirī* school, though radically different in attitudes and basic tenets, also gave an enormous importance to textual analysis and had an essentially linguistic orientation, but with different results, like in the case of Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064; see below) or his pupil Ibn Maḍāʾ (d. 1195), who wrote a virulent refutation of grammarians where he heavily attacked Ibn Ǧinnī (another *muʿtazilī*) and his theories. Nevertheless, in the *muʿtazila*, linguistic concern and textual

[17] On which Grodzki 2011.

[18] Lane 2006, 275-276.

[19] Madelung 2004, 840.

[20] He was "strongly attached" to the *muʿtazila (muʿtazilī qawī fī maḏhabihi,* al-Suyuṭī 1979², 2: 579); *muʿtazilī l-iʿtiqād mutaẓāhiran bihi*, Ibn Ḫallikān n.d., 5: 170; *muʿtazilī l-maḏhab mutaǧāhiran bi-ḏālika*, Yāqūt 1925, 7: 147; [*kāna*] *muʿtaziliyyan qawiyyan fī maḏhabihi muftaḫiran bihi*, Tašköprüzādeh n.d. 2: 87).

[21] Van Ess 2005, 6322. On the *muʿtazila* see Gimaret 1991; on the *muʿtazila* and linguistic matters see also Naǧǧār in Ibn Ǧinnī n.d., 1: 42-44.

analysis were more integrated into the conceptual framework of the school and, since the beginning, the *muʿtazilī*s showed a keen interest in textual analysis and rhetoric due to their habit of promoting lectures and debates and of carrying on doctrinal disputes in the attempt to overcome their opponents. Textual analysis, supported by the conceptual instruments of Greek logic, aimed to study contents and forms of the sermons, and this stimulated a thorough discussion on the semantic and the stylistic aspects of texts, including phonetic harmony; this was coupled with a constant training in the practice of debates and a special attention devoted to the intellectual tradition of ancient cultures.[22] The rationalistic approach to texts and the need to be the defenders of orthodoxy against the attacks of other religious communities resulted in what will be the basis of the canonical rhetoric, i.e. the demonstration of the inimitability of the Qurʾān. There is nothing to be surprised of if the dogma of *iʿǧāz al-Qurʾān* came from *muʿtazilī* authors, like al-Rummānī (d. 994) and ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (d. 1025), who often were also Persophones.[23] Further, linguistics was a kind of neutral ground where sensitive questions could be dealt with so that when *muʿtazilī*s were unwelcome in theology many of them found in grammar «a new channel for their theories».[24] It is not by accident that glottogenesis is extensively dealt with by a *muʿtazilī* like Ibn Ǧinnī,[25] who also proffers an apology of Arabic just as al-Zamaḫšarī does. Al-Zamaḫšarī's defence of rhetoric as the pillar of religious sciences, his concern for linguistics, his call to the mastery of Arabic as a necessary tool for exegetical activity and his constant and refined use of rhetorical tenets in his *tafsīr* seem thus well grounded in his *muʿtazilī* affiliation.

Al-Zamaḫšarī's renown is mostly due to *al-Kaššāf* (biographers almost always mention him as *ṣāḥib al-Kaššāf*), a much-admired *tafsīr* widely used but regarded with suspicion for its rationalist

[22] Ḍayf 1976, 32 ff.

[23] Larcher 2009, 209.

[24] Versteegh, 1997, 131.

[25] Ibn Ǧinnī 1952-1955, 1:40-46; Anghelescu 1993, 97-99 for a partial translation and further references.

interpretations deriving from al-Zamaḫšarī's *muʿtazilī* affiliation.[26] The popularity of *al-Kaššāf* in the Eastern part of the Islamic world had a counterpart in the critical attitude of the Western part, where Mamluk scholars like Šams al-Dīn al-Ḏahabī (d. 1348), Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 1449) and others levelled a severe criticism against the work. This hostile tendency, underlined in scholarly literature, has been critically reevaluated by Ally (2022), who puts back into context the several statements of Mamluk scholars showing that the depiction of a robust "anti-*Kaššāf* sentiment" in Mamluk society does not respond to reality and «foregrounding the importance of theology in our understanding of past Muslim societies had led to a misrepresentation of how a heterodox work like the *Kashshāf* was received».[27] In the same way, the idea that the fame of the *muʿtazilī* character of the *Kaššāf* overshadowed its linguistic merits must be nuanced: recent research debunked the fame of the theological bias of this *tafsīr* and showed its eminently grammatical, lexical and rhetorical concern.[28]

Considering the amount of scholarly literature available on *al-Kaššāf*, I prefer to focus on *al-Mufaṣṣal*, offering a close reading of the introduction to it, putting it in conversation with the introductions of *Muqaddimat al-adab* and *Asrār al-balāġa* (*The secrets of eloquence*, a dictionary of tropes). The introduction to *al-Mufaṣṣal*, that had an enormous success in the medieval Arab world, is a testimony of al-Zamaḫšarī's much-admired mastery of Arabic and a sample of the most elaborate style he used in his *adab* works. More interesting, it is a document whose acid tone against the representatives of the *šuʿūbiyya*, a term that here takes on a linguistic acceptation, is worth further consideration. Al-Zamaḫšarī starts by thanking God who made him an expert of Arabic (*min ʿulamāʾ al-ʿarabiyya*) and a fierce defender of Arabs (*ʿArab*) and their "esprit de corps" (*ʿaṣabiyya*), and who spared him the affiliation to the *šuʿūbī* creed and «biased ideas that are nothing but curses and undermining the truth».[29] This statement,

[26] Lane 2006, 2012; Ullah 2017.
[27] Ally 2022, 317.
[28] E.g. Lane 2005, 2006, 2012; Daldār 2007, 24; Ally 2022.
[29] al-Zamaḫšarī 1879, 2; translation Grodzki 2011, 48.

markedly ethnic-oriented, seems to constitute a response to the tenets of the first *šuʿūbiyya*, where ethnic pride was crucial; but during al-Zamaḫšarī's times the situation was radically different and *šuʿūbī* aspirations were confined to the literary domain.[30] The ethnic orientation is also visible in the praise of the Prophet, when his ethnic descent is emphasised in tribal terms through the mention of the ethnonyms ʿAdnān, the traditional ancestor of the Arabs of Northern Arabia, and Quraysh, Muḥammad's tribe. This ethnic-oriented description of the Prophet is mirrored in *Muqaddimat al-adab*, where Muḥammad is described as *al-nabī al-arabī*, and his kinsfolk qualified as the most noble of the *ʿArab*[31] and in *Asās al-balāġa*, where almost all the same terms (*al-nabī al-ʿarabī*, ʿAdnān) are recalled.[32] The argumentation of *al-Mufaṣṣal* then takes a linguistic slant when the mission of the Prophet, whose scope is universal since he was sent to all mankind (*al-aswad wa-l-aḥmar*), is identified with the transmission of the Qur'ān, qualified as the "Arabic book" (*al-kitāb al-ʿarabī*). This easily drives to the well-known theme of the superiority of Arabic (*ʿarabiyya*) that emerges, coupled with the ethnic theme, in the following passage where it is said that God elevated this language by sending the best messenger and the best book to the *ʿArab*, and not to the *ʿağam*, among all his creatures. This allusion to the superiority of Arabic (and hence the Arab) is echoed in a passage of *Muqaddimat al-adab* that opens with a clear statement: «God preferred the language of the Arab (*lisān al-ʿArab*) over all the languages and the Book revealed in this language (*al-kitāb al-munzal bihi*) over all other books»; and later allusion is made to its majesty (*ğalāla*), a terms that echoes an attribute of God.[33] Language, ethnicity and religion are thus strictly intertwined. The same association recurs, but in more nuanced terms, in *Asās al-balāġa*, when Arabic is mentioned as the language with which God privileged the Arab prophet and in which God concealed the treasures of pure

[30] Mottahedeh 1976, 162.
[31] al-Zamaḫšarī 1843, 1.
[32] al-Zamaḫšarī 1965, 7.
[33] al-Zamaḫšarī 1843, 1.

language and eloquence (*al-faṣāḥa wa-l-bayān*).[34] The logical consequence is that those who lower the status of this language and deny it the privilege conferred by God, like the *šuʿūbiyya,* deviate from the true path.[35]

The transition to the second point is easily made: al-Zamaḫšarī expresses astonishment at the injustice and aberration of those who bitterly criticise Arabic although they cannot dispense with it, because Islamic sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-islāmiyya: fiqh, kalām, tafsīr, aḫbār*) require a thorough knowledge of Arabic (*ʿarabiyya*). This is something that cannot be denied nor concealed, and from Arabic the argument moves to the core of linguistic studies, *iʿrāb* (here a synecdoche for "grammar"), which is crucial in legal discourse and in reading and interpreting all the texts, which are explained, commented and written in "this language" (*bi-hāḏā l-lisān*), i.e. Arabic.[36] The function of Arabic as a scholarly language also occurs as a topic in the introduction to *Muqaddimat al-adab*, followed and reinforced by a bitter complaint about the shortage of scholars mastering Arabic and devoting themselves to its study.[37]

The link between Arabic linguistics and Qur'anic exegesis is well-known,[38] but if in early Islam there was a separation between *tafsīr* and grammar, later they came closer, and the insistence on the grammatical skills required in Islamic scholarship made by a famous *mufassir* like al-Zamaḫšarī seems particularly meaningful in this perspective. A similar theme is found in the introduction of *Asrār al-balāġa*, where Zamaḫšarī presents *balāġa* (here intended as 'eloquence') as the hallmark of the Qurʾān and praises his book which scrutinises Arabic in all its pure and elegant expressions (*mā faṣuḥa min luġātihā wa-maluḥa min balāġātihā*) based on authoritative oral and written sources, and concludes with the

[34] al-Zamaḫšarī 1965, 7.
[35] al-Zamaḫšarī 1843, 1.
[36] al-Zamaḫšarī 1843, 1-2.
[37] *Ibid.*, 1.
[38] E.g. Versteegh 1993.

related mention of *iʿrāb*, *maʿānī* and *bayān*, all of which are required to master eloquence and elegant diction.[39]

In *al-Mufaṣṣal* al-Zamaḫšarī insists on Arabic as the language of schooling, controversy and scientific debates, adding that in Arabic are written legal and administrative documents so much so that people are confronted with it wherever they go.[40] After having emphasised this pervasive presence, he expounds on what he considers a paradox, i.e. that though they use it, people deny the prestige of Arabic, refrain from honouring and extolling it, forbid to learn and to teach it, and pretend that they can dispense with it. Why then, he asks provocatively, they do not abandon "*al-luġa wa-l-iʿrāb*" in exegesis and law (*tafsīr*, *fiqh*)? This paradoxical challenge is followed by a list of morphosyntactic phenomena frequent in legal language intended as a demonstration that *naḥw* (i.e., knowledge of *iʿrāb*) is crucial in reading and interpreting texts. The argument goes further, investing the social sphere, when he presents correct speech as the mark of a high rank, both in terms of knowledge and social status: speaking bad Arabic during lectures (*maǧālis al-tadrīs*) and debates (*munāẓarāt*) deprives knowledge of its splendour, and ridicules the elite (*al-ḫāṣṣa*) making it similar to the masses (*al-ʿāmma*).[41]

This emphasis on the cultural function of Arabic and on its universal spread seems a response at the linguistic situation of the Eastern provinces where, contrary to other regions, like Egypt, Arabic had been readily adopted but also readily abandoned by people who, for all their needs, reverted to their national idioms and left Arabic reserved for collateral use.[42] In al-Zamaḫšarī's time the cultural and administrative policy of the Seljuk dynasty had contributed to enhance the use of Persian, so reducing the prestige of Arabic as the only lingua franca,[43] and Persian was also used to write treatises in fields previously considered dominated by Arabic, like prosody and lexicography. Al-Zamaḫšarī was well

[39] al-Zamaḫšarī 1965, 7-8.
[40] al-Zamaḫšarī 1879, 2-3.
[41] *Ibid.*, 3.
[42] Ayyad 1990, 413.
[43] Meneghini 2004, 10-11.

aware of this situation: in the court of Atsiz Garchāʾi (to whom he dedicated *Muqaddimat al-adab*) he got acquainted with men of letters writing both in Arabic and Persian, like Rašīd al-Dīn al-Waṭwāṭ (d. 1177), the chief secretary of the court who wrote his ornate letters in Arabic and Persian, and with whom al-Zamaḫšarī had a series of conversations witnessed by the *Risālat Rašīd al-Dīn al-Waṭwāṭ fī-mā ǧarā baynahu wa-bayna al-imām al-Zamaḫšarī min al-muḥāwarāt* (*The treatise of Rašīd al-Dīn al-Waṭwāṭ on the dialogues between him and al-imām al-Zamaḫšarī*). Al-Waṭwāṭ also penned a bilingual treatise on versification, which probably reveals that, in spite of the growing prestige of Persian, men of letters were still reluctant to draw up "serious" works entirely in Persian. Anyhow, Arabic was still the predominant language in religious sciences, even if by that time interlinear Persian translations of the Qurʾān were judged permissible and Persian translations of the Holy Book were not uncommon; but the use of translation for *tafsīr* was something that seems to need for a justification.[44] Though scholars and men of letters felt they should use Arabic when writing on elevated subjects, the balance between the two languages was changing, and a growing number of texts on medicine, astronomy, philosophy, mystics etc. were written in Persian. This could explain the reason for al-Zamaḫšarī's dismay and his fierce defence of Arabic.

In *al-Mufaṣṣal* he also insists on grammar, when he speaks highly of *iʿrāb*, which is «far better than anything else» and the staircase (*mirqāt*) raised to *bayān*, that allows to bring to light the textual subtleties (*nukat nazm*) of the Qurʾān (a reference to *al-Nukat fī iʿǧāz al-Qurʾān* of the *muʿtazilī* grammarian, rhetorician and theologian al-Rummānī), to highlight its beauties (*maḥāsin*) and to discover its treasures, to such an extent that to be diverted from it is tantamount to closing the ways of good.[45] An interesting equivalence *kalām al-ʿArab/iʿrāb* is outlined in what follows, when al-Zamaḫšarī explains that he wrote *al-Mufaṣṣal*, which is focussed on *iʿrāb*, out of his concern for the desire of the Muslims to learn

[44] O'Kane 2009, 5-6.
[45] al-Zamaḫšarī 1879, 3.

the speech of the Arabs (*kalām al-ʿArab*) and out of his solicitude for colleagues interested in philological disciplines (*adab*).[46]

Some arguments seem worth of consideration. First, the privileged status of Arabic, the language of revelation addressed to all human beings, that acquires a special status among all languages. Though this is a widespread argument used to demonstrate the superiority of Arabic,[47] it is not universally accepted, and other linguists had different positions. The Andalusian Ibn Ḥazm for instance, in spite of his «religious respect for the language in itself, in which his Ẓāhirī doctrine has its roots»,[48] denies the superiority of Arabic on the ground that in this regard all languages are equivalent to each other (*tasāwat al-luġātu fī hāḏā tasāwiyan wāḥidan*).[49] Second, the role of Arabic as a scholarly language; this is so rooted in the minds of the cultural elite that they did not even think to express themselves in another idiom: Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī (d. 987), a distinguished grammarian suspected of *muʿtazilism* whose mother tongue was Persian, was such a severe defender of *ʿarabiyya* that he refused to match Arabic and Persian.[50] In grammar there was no room for *šuʿūbī* claims, nor was there in rhetoric: ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Ǧurǧānī, a Persian and Persian-speaking, penned works in praise of Arabic and of its beauty, included one *(Dalāʾil al-iʿǧāz)* demonstrating the inimitability of the Qur'ān with linguistic arguments. The identification of Arabic with Arabs, and Arabs with Islam which

[46] al-Zamaḫšarī 1879, 4.

[47] E.g. Ibn al-Sarrāǧ, *Uṣūl*, 1: 2; Ibn Ǧinnī 1952-1955, 1: 4.

[48] Arnaldez, 1986, 792.

[49] Ibn Ḥazm 2008, 1: 34. « Toutes les langues existantes sont également capables de recevoir la révélation et d'exprimer la vérité […] L'arabe n'a donc pas, en tant qu'idiome, le moindre privilège » (Arnaldez 1956, 47). On multilingualism in the Islamic vision of language Salvaggio 2024.

[50] His pupil Ibn Ǧinnī relates: "I asked about the two languages [i.e. Arabic and Persian] the scholars of Arabic of Persian descent trained in their language [Persian] before becoming Arab (*istaʿraba*). They did not match them [i.e. the two languages] and even did not accept such a question, by far remote from their mind: they were convinced and fascinated by the superior beauty of Arabic. I repeatedly asked Abū ʿAlī, and his answer was like what I have just related" and continues "No one of my masters – and he listed their names – never put them [i.e. Arabic and Persian] on equal footing nor brought them closer together" (Ibn Ǧinnī 1952-1955, 1: 242-243; see Versteegh 1997, 106).

inspired the virulent words of al-Ǧāḥiẓ,[51] was not valid anymore, and by the time *al-Mufaṣṣal* was penned, «the debate was nearing its close; and unconscious identification of Islam with (linguistic) Arabism had taken root in the conscience of the believers».[52]

A further element worth of consideration is the meaning of *iʿrāb*. *Iʿrāb*, considered the distinctive feature of Arabic par excellence, is often used as a near synonym of *ʿarabiyya* or *kalām al-ʿArab*, an equivalence that forms the backbone of the Arabic grammatical tradition. This was not a purely philological matter, since *iʿrāb* was bound up with politics:[53] texts are teeming with anecdotes featuring "correct" (i.e. inflected) speech as an intrinsic character of rulers and political elites, or portraying political authorities as the defenders of the purity of *ʿarabiyya*.[54] Though this is motivated by his personal interest (it represents the transitional passage between the introduction and the inscription to the dedicatee of the work, Atsiz Garchāʾi), al-Zamaḫšarī's words in *Muqaddimat al-adab* insisting on the favour of the rulers for those mastering Arabic, even after the end of "the Arab empire" (*dawlat al-ʿarab*)[55] reveal a clear perception of the link between power and language, political elites and Arabic.

Al-Zamaḫšarī's approach to Arabic exemplifies the deep interconnection between language, religion, and (ethnic) identity in the Arabic intellectual tradition.[56] Arabic, as the primary vehicle of Islamic scholarship, law and literature, extended far beyond its original homeland, becoming a dominant linguistic and cultural force across the Muslim empire. Unlike the mere imposition of a conqueror's tongue, its spread was not solely dependent on military conquests but was propelled by its role as the language of the Qur'ān, governance, and intellectual life. In this regard, Arabic paralleled the expansion of Greek in the classical world, serving as both a medium of cultural transmission and a symbol of prestige.

[51] Norris 1990, 35-36.
[52] *Ibid.*, 44.
[53] Owens 2000, 122.
[54] E.g. Fück 1955, 23-25; al-Ṭanṭāwī n.d., 16-26.
[55] al-Zamaḫšarī 1843, 1-2.
[56] Suleiman 2003, 46.

As a marker of social status and a unifying element, Arabic transcended ethnic and cultural boundaries, integrating diverse populations into a shared linguistic and intellectual tradition. Its mastery was indispensable for the ruling classes and the learned elite, who relied on it not only for scholarly pursuits but also for advancing their material and political interests. The ability to communicate in Arabic became a prerequisite for participation in the highest echelons of society, reinforcing its status as the language of power and erudition. Thus, Arabic was a vehicle for social mobility, cultural assimilation, and intellectual engagement, shaping the trajectories of individuals and communities across the medieval Islamic world.

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Freccia, tempo, destino. A proposito di azlam

GIULIANO MION

In his book *Kitāb al-azmina wa-l-amkina* ('Book of Times and Places'), the Persian lexicographer Abū ʿAlī Marzūqī al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1030) includes a rare word denoting time: *azlam*. This word is explicitly linked to *zalam*, the arrow used in the Ǧāhiliyya for divination (*istiqsām*). This short paper offers some remarks on the term(s) denoting the concept of "arrow" in order to reconstruct the symbolism of this weapon and its relationship with temporality, time, fate, and destiny.

Keywords: *Dahr* – Time – Fate – Arrows – Belomancy

> *Così vedi le cose contingenti*
> *anzi che sieno in sé, mirando il punto*
> *a cui tutti li tempi son presenti.*
> Dante, *Divina commedia*
> (Paradiso, Canto 17)

1. Introduzione: azlam*, uno dei nomi del* dahr

Il *Kitāb al-azmina wa-l-amkina* ("Libro dei tempi e dei luoghi") di Abū ʿAlī Marzūqī al-Iṣfahānī (m. 1030), critico e lessicografo persiano arabografo, include un capitolo dedicato ai nomi del tempo e alle sue categorie (*Fī asmāʾ ad-dahr wa-aqṭāʿihi*) in cui ne compare uno che possiamo giudicare particolarmente raro, ossia

azlam. Poche parole condensano la sua spiegazione sull'etimologia del termine, sull'imprevedibilità degli effetti del tempo e sulla ripetizione perpetua della sua fissità:

> *yağūzu an yakūna summiya d-dahr azlam tašabbuhan bi-z-zalam yakūnu min al-qidāḥ liʾannahā ʿalā ġarār wāḥid. wa-kaḏālika l-layālī wa-l-ayyām taǧīʾu ʿalā miṯāl wāḥid. wa-li-ḏālika qīla: ad-dahr takrār al-layl wa-n-nahār*.[1]
>
> Può darsi che il tempo sia stato chiamato anche *azlam* come allegoria di una delle frecce [che si usano per l'oracolo] allo stesso modo. Così anche le notti e i giorni si presentano allo stesso modo. Per questo si diceva che il tempo sia una reiterazione della notte e del giorno.

Ampliando l'orizzonte al *Lisān al-ʿarab* di Ibn Manẓūr (1233-1312) in cerca di una comparazione e di una conferma, ci si può imbattere nella radice √*zlm* sotto la quale vengono rubricati diversi derivati. Scorrendo, nella definizione di *azlam* si spiega che esso è: «*ad-dahr, wa-qīla: ad-dahr aš-šadīd, wa-qīla: aš-šadīd al-murr, wa-qīla: al-mutaʿalliq bi-l-balāyā wa-l-manāyā*»[2] '[È] il tempo, il destino violento, il destino amaro, che ha a che fare con le calamità e la morte'.

Due premesse traduttologiche.

La prima riguarda la resa di *dahr* con il termine "tempo", che si appella all'indulgenza dei lettori, onde evitare di ripetere anche in questa sede quanto già ampiamente riflettuto e sviluppato altrove.[3] La traduzione per cui si è optato è senza alcun dubbio semplicistica, ma basterà qui sintetizzare che *dahr* è un concetto sfuggente, difficile a tradursi in maniera univoca con una sola parola, perché compendia le nozioni di tempo, destino e fato ineluttabile.

La seconda riguarda la generica resa di *manāyā* (che di fatto è il plurale di *maniyya*) con un banale "morte", benché sia senz'altro più acconcia la resa "fato".[4] Tale vocabolo nella poesia preislamica

[1] Abū ʿAlī Marzūqī al-Iṣfaḥānī, *Kitāb al-azmina wa-l-amkina*, Bayrūt, 1996, 214.
[2] *Lisān al-ʿarab*, vol. 12, 271.
[3] Mion 2024.
[4] Amaldi 1999, 23-24.

si localizza perlopiù in estrema prossimità del termine *dahr*[5] e va ricondotto a una radice √*mny*, attestata anche nelle iscrizioni in safaitico,[6] e ad essa si riconduce il teonimo Manāt, ossia la dea preislamica della sorte. La radice, peraltro, è fortemente assonante con un'altra, ossia √*mnn*, da cui deriva il sinonimo *manūn* che, talvolta, viene erroneamente confuso come un derivato di *maniyya/manāyā*.[7] Per inciso, ma anche a mo' d'anticipazione con quanto va delineandosi alle righe successive, si osservi che a √*mny* si deve il verbo *manā* 'assegnare una porzione di' e che invece a √*mnn* il verbo *manna* 'tagliare, rompere'.

Tutti i valori passati ora rapidamente in rassegna si ritrovano comodamente sintetizzati nella definizione che il *Lexicon* di Edward W. Lane fornisce di *azlam* (posto nel sintagma *al-azlam al-ǧaḍaʿ*, dove *ǧaḍaʿ* sta per 'perennemente giovane') come 'Time, or fortune that is hard, or rigorous, in its course, abounding with trials and deaths.'[8]

Resta ora da stabilire il rapporto tra tempo e freccia.

2. Da azlam *ad* azlām

La radice √*zlm* è registrata nel dizionario di David Cohen essenzialmente per l'aramaico e l'arabo, e per davvero poche attestazioni in etiosemitico (in cui *z-l-m* > *ǧ-l-m*). Si ha in siriaco *zəlam* 'induire en erreur, se tromper, commettre une erreur'; in maltese *zilem* 'être tordu, boudé' e *zelliem* 'qui fait des nœuds, qui commet des erreurs (par distraction)'; in arabo *zalama* 'couper, trancher, mutiler' nonché la forma aumentata *zallama* 'lisser, arrondir, égaliser, tailler'; in ḥassāniyya *zellem* 'trouer'. Accanto a questi significati, l'arabo sviluppa inoltre una serie di termini riferiti a caratteristiche fisiche degli animali, come *azlam* 'qui a les extrémités des oreilles coupées (chameau marqué)', *zalamat-*

[5] Caskel 1926, 11.
[6] Sul fato nelle iscrizioni safaitiche, si veda Al Jallad 2022, 73-77.
[7] Mion 2024, p. 921-922.
[8] Lane 1863, 1248.

'corne du pied fondu (des ruminants), caroncule du pied (des brebis et des chèvres)', e poco altro ancora.[9]

Sembra pertanto preponderante il significato di tagliare qualcosa in modo da conferire una forma mutila all'oggetto dell'intervento: da qui, per l'appunto, si sviluppa il sostantivo indicante la freccia.

Infatti, il termine *azlam* contenuto nel brano citato viene paragonato al termine *zalam* (pl. *azlām*) che indica la freccetta priva di punta e impennaggi, forse in origine addirittura una sorta di bastoncino, ossia lo strumento che in epoca preislamica veniva adoperato dagli arabi per l'*istiqsām*. Quest'ultimo era il nome del procedimento seguito per ottenere l'oracolo su una data questione con domanda alternativa (sul modello «Dovrei o non dovrei fare questo?») che prevedeva una reazione affermativa o negativa. L'oracolo non consisteva quindi in una vera e propria predizione del futuro, ma in una richiesta di indicazione sul comportamento da seguire.[10] Una descrizione sintetica ma efficace si ritrova nel *Lisān al-ʿarab* per il quale tali frecce (*azlām*) erano:

> *sihām kānat li-ahl al-ǧāhiliyya maktūb ʿalā baʿḍihā "amaranī rabbī", wa-ʿalā baʿḍihā "nahānī rabbī", fa-in ḫaraǧa as-sahm alladī ʿalayhi "amaranī rabbī" maḍā li-ḥāǧatihi, wa-in ḫaraǧa lladī ʿalayhi "nahānī rabbī" lam yamḍi fī amrihi.*
>
> Frecce della gente della Ǧāhiliyya, su alcune delle quali era scritto "Dio mi ha ordinato" e su altre "Dio mi ha vietato"; se usciva la freccia con la scritta "Dio mi ha ordinato" allora si dava seguito alla cosa, ma se usciva quella con la scritta "Dio mi ha vietato" non si dava seguito a nulla.

L'operazione dell'*istiqsām* consisteva nel tirare a sorte sette frecce le quali, in genere, erano custodite da un individuo con funzioni semisacerdotali (*kāhin*); l'estrazione a sorte avveniva dopo il sacrificio di un animale e si teneva in un luogo caratterizzato da una

[9] Cohen 1999, 739.

[10] Per una panoramica generale delle forme di divinazione araba, si rimanda a Fahd 1958 e, per uno studio più organico, a Fahd 1966.

sacralità riconosciuta.[11] Mentre a Ḏū l-Ḫalaṣa tale pratica si svolgeva con modalità assai sobrie, alla Mecca avveniva tipicamente davanti alla statua del dio Hubal nella Kaʿba. Vale la pena ricordare rapidamente che tale statua era posta sulla bocca di un pozzo, a impedire quindi la fuoriuscita delle acque sotterranee (si pensi al *təhōm* della tradizione ebraica), analogamente a processi costruttivi in uso in santuari di altre civiltà semitiche come, per esempio, il tempio di Ninurta a Kalḫu, secondo gli annali di Assurnasirpal.[12] Il simbolismo è evidente: l'acqua, fonte di vita e di rigenerazione, elemento da conservare e rispettare ma all'occorrenza anche da temere, non doveva emergere in superficie.[13]

Nel passo del *Lisān al-ʿarab* citato in precedenza, le frecce divinatorie (*azlām*) sono definite come *sihām* ('frecce') della gente della Ǧāhiliyya. In genere, i lessicografi definiscono la freccetta *zalam* per l'appunto come *sahm* (pl. *sihām*), o *qidḥ* (pl. *qidāḥ*, *aqduḥ*, *aqdāḥ*).[14] Nel suo *Tahḏīb al-luġa*, ad esempio, il lessicografo al-Azharī (m. 980) spiega esplicitamente che «*al-azlām hiya qidāh al-amr wa-n-nahy*» 'le freccette divinatorie sono frecce di ordine o diniego', o analogamente si esprime il *Muḫtār aṣ-ṣiḥāḥ* di ar-Rāzī (m. 1266) per il quale «*hiya as-sihām allatī kāna ahl al-ǧāhiliyya yastaqsimūna bihā*» 'le frecce con cui nella Ǧāhiliyya si facevano oracoli'. Il *Lexicon* di Freytag spiega che *zalam* è una 'sagitta sine alis, *pec.* quibus aleam exercere et res distribuendas sortiri solebant Arabes ante Mohammedem viventes', ma nella stessa radice non compare alcun riferimento al nome temporale *azlam*.[15]

3. La potenza delle frecce divine

È opportuno ora ricordare come la radice √*qsm* veicoli l'idea di "divisione in pezzi", ma anche come in diverse lingue semitiche

[11] Wellhausen 1887, 132-133; Ryckmans 1951, 9 e 14.

[12] Lewy 1950, 344-345.

[13] Per una lettura di più ampio respiro della fenomenologia, si rimanda a De Santillana – von Dechend 1983, 261-262.

[14] Sulle varie tipologie di frecce, una rassegna generale si trova nel datato Hammer-Purgstall 1852, 23 e ss.

[15] Freytag 1830-1837, 260.

essa abbia finito per essere utilizzata per indicare pratiche di mantica. All'ebraico *qesem/qasam* per indicare la pratica belomantica (*Ezechiele* 21: 26 e 27) e la magia dell'oracolo (*Numeri* 23: 23), si accostano l'aramaico *qəsam*, il siriaco *qəṣam*, il mandaico *kaṣma* (dove *q-ṣ* > *k-ṣ*), il sudarabico *mqs₁m*, il geez *qasm* e *maqsəm/maqsam*, e ovviamente l'arabo *istiqsām* e *qism*.

In definitiva, il procedimento di estrazione di un *zalam* era una pratica di belomanzia non eccessivamente dissimile da quella dei greci, ma anche in linea con quella degli ebrei descritta qua e là nella Bibbia. In *Ezechiele* 21: 26, infatti, si recita: «Il re di Babilonia è fermo al bivio, all'inizio delle due strade, per interrogare le sorti: agita le frecce, interroga gli dèi domestici, osserva il fegato». Ma il passo ora citato non è che uno fra i tanti in cui i presagi sono affidati alle frecce.

Nell'Antico Testamento la freccia si ritrova anche in brani e contesti che non hanno nulla a che fare con le pratiche divinatorie e, invece, diventa simbolo, metafora, di una potenza superiore.

In *Giobbe* 34: 6, dietro al lamento tradotto generalmente con «La mia ferita è incurabile», si nasconde un *anuš ḥiṣṣi bəli-paša*ʿ che mostra come la ferita, la piaga, sia stata prodotta da un termine che, semanticamente, oltre a essere "freccia [scoccata da Dio]" potrebbe stare anche per "sorte", da cui un parallelismo con l'arabo *ḥaẓẓ mašūm* reso dal *Lexicon* di Freytag con 'fortuna adversa'.[16]

Si consideri ancora *Isaia* 49: 2, dove la metafora vuole che l'uomo sia diventato strumento per volere divino: «Ha reso la mia bocca come spada affilata, mi ha nascosto all'ombra della sua mano, mi ha reso freccia appuntita, mi ha riposto nella sua faretra».

Ma è nei *Salmi* che la freccia ricorre più spesso.

Nel Salmo 37: 3, il peccatore supplica Dio: «Le tue frecce mi hanno trafitto, su di me è scesa la tua mano», o ancora nel Salmo 64: 8, in cui Dio castiga i suoi nemici: «Ma Dio li colpisce con le sue frecce: all'improvviso essi sono feriti». E infine nel Salmo 143:

[16] Freytag 1830-1837, 397. In proposito, Iwry 1961, 30.

6, in cui la punizione divina viene ancora una volta descritta come una frecciata: «Le tue folgori disperdano i nemici, lancia frecce, sconvolgili».

In tutti questi passi, il termine utilizzato per freccia è חֵץ *ḥeṣ* che si accosta al greco βέλος, utilizzato per l'appunto nella Settanta, a indicare più comunemente anche qualsiasi arma da lancio, inclusi giavellotti e aste.

Si osservi che, in alcuni passi, la freccia è uno strumento adoperato direttamente da Dio; in altri, essa è lo strumento con cui Dio esprime più indirettamente la sua potenza. Ad ogni modo, è sempre esplicita l'interazione tra la freccia e la mano, insieme al movimento che quest'ultima attua.

Ma torniamo al passo del Salmo 143 citato poc'anzi: il verbo finale è וּתְהֻמֵּם *u-təhummem* che rende semanticamente anche il turbamento. La Settanta traduce καὶ συνταράξεις αὐτούς, legato al verbo ταράξειν e al sostantivo ταραξή indicanti uno scompiglio e un turbamento nell'animo, una traduzione alla quale si allinea quella latina con la resa *et conturbabis eos*. In conclusione, le frecce di Dio provocano un profondo sconvolgimento interiore in chi vi entra in contatto.[17]

Lo sconvolgimento dello spirito è in grado di modificare l'atteggiamento di un individuo, ed è forse qui che si coglie il legame con l'*istiqsām* dell'Arabia preislamica che doveva essere visto come una pratica tanto sconvolgente da essere poi stata esplicitamente interdetta dal Corano in due versetti della sūra *al-Māʾida*. Il primo (5: 3) è piuttosto lungo e impone interdizioni alimentari riguardanti gli animali deceduti con modalità non idonee, per poi aggiungere alla serie di divieti quello di tirare a sorte con le freccette («*ḥurrimat ʿalaykum [...] an tastaqsimū bil-azlām*»). Il secondo (5: 90) è più breve, ma comunque incisivo: «O voi che credete, in verità il vino, il *maysir*, le pietre idolatriche, le frecce divinatorie sono sozzure, opere di Satana. Evitatele, a che per avventura possiate prosperare».[18]

[17] Mazzucchelli e Bracali 2022, 132.

[18] La traduzione è quella di Alessandro Bausani (1955 e ristampe successive).

Oltre al Corano, le fonti d'epoca islamica che raccontano l'antica pratica delle freccette divinatorie sono diverse. Fra le varie, per citare solo le più autorevoli, si consideri il *Kitāb al-aṣnām* di Ibn al-Kalbī (737-819), storiografo specializzato nelle credenze della Ǧāhiliyya, che a più riprese ne spiega gli usi,[19] o ancora la *Sīra* di Ibn Iṣḥāq (m. 761/7), pervenutaci nella versione di Ibn Hišām (m. 833), che narra episodi di divinazione avvenuti ai tempi del Profeta e che riguardano perfino suo padre ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib.[20]

Ma per fare ancora luce sul nesso tra freccia e sorte si rende necessario un ulteriore approfondimento lessicografico.

4. Frecce e destino

In Palestina e Fenicia sono state ritrovate punte bronzee di freccia, risalenti al 1100 a.C., che riportano nomi propri di persona accompagnati dall'elemento <*ḥṣ*>, e che avevano verosimilmente scopi divinatori.[21] Sul piano paleografico, le punte ritrovate a El-Khadr (5 km da Betlemme) presentano una *ṣade* con una forma diversa dal solito, atta forse a indicare un altro tipo di fricativa. Sul piano linguistico, invece, se pensiamo che questo <*ḥṣ*> cananaico poteva essere pronunciato altrimenti, si finisce per riallinearsi a *ḥẓẓ*. In ugaritico, ad esempio, si ha *ḥẓ* per 'freccia' e *ḥẓt* per 'fortuna': si consideri infatti *bʿl ḥẓ* per 'signore delle frecce' da cui 'signore del destino', nonché *ḥyt ḥẓt* 'vita fortunata'.[22] Passando all'arabo, si riscontra il termine *ḥaẓwa* a cui i lessicografi arabi attribuiscono la radice √*ḥẓw* (cananaico *ḥṣy*) e i due significati di 'freccetta' e di 'sorte, fortuna'. Ma si noti altresì che, accanto a questo termine, l'arabo dispone anche di *ḥaẓẓ* che trasmette il significato principale di 'fortuna, sorte' a cui si cumula

[19] Di questo libro è disponibile l'edizione inglese di Faris 1952, a cui ora si aggiunge la recente edizione critica spagnola di Monferrer Sala 2023.

[20] Fahd 1958, 56-57; Fahd 1966, 188.

[21] L'ipotesi poggia su una serie di interpretazioni avanzate da diversi studiosi, tra i quali spicca il lavoro di Iwry 1961. In favore della tesi, fra gli altri, Karner 2006. Per un parere diametralmente opposto si veda invece Sass 2010.

[22] Si vedano Cohen 2010, 860; Del Olmo Lete – Sanmartín 2015, 377-378.

secondariamente quello di 'porzione, pezzo', e così ancora oltre in semitico meridionale (sudarabico ed etiopico).

Tralasciando l'eventuale discussione su un'originaria radice biconsonantica poi ispessitasi in arabo (e altrove) in radice triconsonantica con semivocale compensatoria (→ **ḥẓw*) o con raddoppiamento dell'ultima consonante (→ **ḥẓẓ*), si può comunque pensare che già nel Vicino Oriente antico *ḥ(e)ṣ* avesse assunto una doppia valenza, di freccia e fortuna, forse anche per metonimia, ma anche per la popolarità che le pratiche di divinazione dovevano avere all'epoca.

Per colpire le proprie vittime le frecce sono l'arma preferita dal fato, sia inteso esso in arabo come *dahr*, come *maniyya/manāyā*, o indicato con altri termini ancora, e la poesia araba antica fornisce un ampio catalogo di casistiche.

La *muʿallaqa* di Labīd, ad esempio, parla senza mezzi termini dell'infallibilità delle armi del fato (*inna l-manāyā lā taṭīšu sihāmuhā* 'le frecce della sorte che non mancano mai il bersaglio'), ma i riferimenti sono abbondanti anche in poeti minori. al-Nābiġa al-Ǧaʿdī sostiene esplicitamente che il fato colpisca gli uomini con i suoi dardi (*fawwaqa d-dahru ilaynā nablahu* 'il destino incocca la sua freccia contro di noi'). Rabīʿa b. Mukaddam spiega che non v'è cura per le frecciate del destino (*lākin sihāmu l-manāyā man yuṣibna la-hū, lam yuġni-hī ṭibbu ḏī ṭibbin wa-lā rāqī* 'ma per chi lo colpisca la freccia del destino, non vi sarà rimedio, guarigione né miglioramento'). La poetessa Umm Nudba si lamenta tanto del marito vigliacco al punto da preferirgli i colpi del fato (*laʿalla maniyyatī taʾtī sarīʿan, wa-tarmīnī sihāma l-ḥādiṯāti* 'forse la mia ora estrema rapida verrà, e mi colpiranno le frecce del destino').

Insomma, la freccia ha potere assoluto e, andando a ritroso nel tempo, che "vita" e "freccia" in sumerico suonino omofone (*ti*) non è forse frutto del caso. Del resto, l'arma ha un ruolo determinante sin dai miti cosmogonici più remoti, come proprio quello mesopotamico in cui il dio Marduk pone fine al caos uccidendo la dea Tiamat in una battaglia in cui è decisiva una freccia letale: non solo viene ristabilito l'ordine, ma vengono anche recuperate le Tavole del Destino di cui si era impossessato

Qingu, figlio della dea, che contengono lo *šīmtu*, ossia la porzione di ventura e sventura assegnata a ciascun individuo.

5. Simbolismi antichi e moderni

Se si estende la breve ricerca di queste poche pagine al greco, ci si imbatte in una grande ricchezza lessicale per indicare i concetti di tempo, fato e destino. Di questi, i più usati sono αἰών, καιρός, χρόνος e ἐνιαυτός, che non è senza interesse esaminare come siano stati tradotti in arabo a partire dal IX secolo. Stando anche a quanto reperibile sul progetto del *Glossarium Græco-arabicum* diretto da Gerhard Endress,[23] αἰών è perlopiù *dahr*, καιρός soprattutto *waqt* e meno frequentemente *zamān* a cui, invece, corrisponde χρόνος, mentre ἐνιαυτός è quasi sempre *sana* e pochissime volte *dawr*.[24]

In ambiente greco, il rimando più pertinente lo si deve a καιρός, termine dall'etimologia discussa che viene ricondotta perlopiù a κεράννυμι 'mischiare', κρίνω 'dividere' oppure a κείρω 'tagliare'.[25] Mentre si apprezzerà ancora una volta che il concetto di tagliare e dividere in pezzi e porzioni ricorre puntualmente in tutta questa nostra storia, si dovrà altresì ricordare che tra i derivati compare καίριος il cui significato più antico è 'mortale'.[26] L'*Iliade* ne conta quattro occorrenze[27] e con esso ci si riferisce al luogo nevralgico del corpo umano dove l'arma poteva penetrare facilmente attraverso l'armatura, ossia il punto critico preso di mira dall'arciere.[28] Anche qui, se si dà conto di un'ulteriore ipotesi di riconducibilità del termine anche a κήρ/κηρός indicante il concetto di "morte", a sua volta dalla radice indeuropea **ker*,[29] si

[23] Consultabile liberamente su rete al sito https://glossga.bbaw.de/.

[24] Per una visione d'insieme, Böwering 1977; per una breve analisi delle rese greche, Pines 1936; per le implicazioni sulla percezione della circolarità del tempo anche su basi etimologiche, Mion 2024.

[25] Chantraine 1968-1980, 480; Beekes 2010, 617.

[26] Chantraine 1968-1980, 480; Beekes 2010, 617.

[27] Esattamente in IV, v. 185; VIII, v. 84 ss. e v. 325 ss.; XI, v. 439.

[28] Onians 1998, 420-421; Mazzucchelli – Bracali 2022, 30-31.

[29] Più vago in tal senso Chantraine 1968-1980, 526, mentre più deciso Beekes 2010, 688-689, ma non si possono dimenticare le analisi di Trédé-Boulmer 1992.

ritrova un legame fra la nozione di tempo e quella di destino esiziale. Tale legame è ancora più forte se si considera la proposta di Richard B. Onians sulla possibile relazione fra καιρός e καῖρος, termine quest'ultimo in genere considerato ben distinto e dall'etimologia incerta.[30] Καῖρος indica l'arte di far passare i fili attraverso l'ordito e, in particolare, lo spazio vuoto lasciato durante la tessitura dalle filacce che formano una serie di aperture triangolari. Nella tessitura, l'apertura dell'ordito ha un tempo ridotto e il filo va inserito in un istante ben preciso. In definitiva, per analogia, l'evoluzione semantica dei termini avrebbe inizialmente previsto l'apertura attraverso cui l'arciere scocca la freccia e, in seguito, avrebbe designato l'istante critico in cui tale freccia scocca.

Si potrà certamente obiettare che la freccia, nella cultura greca, è insieme all'arco lo strumento con cui si accompagna Eros, tanto in ambito letterario quanto in quello iconografico. L'attitudine del dio a servirsi di arco e freccia ha notoriamente esiti diametralmente e drammaticamente opposti, non solo di morte, ma anche di fulmineo innamoramento. Quest'ultima valenza, tuttavia, nel nostro caso porta forse fuori strada perché, tanto nell'Antico Testamento più volte evocato, quanto nelle altre culture semitiche antiche, inclusa quella araba preislamica, non sembra essere attestata.[31]

Insomma, vedendo così le cose, l'anello argomentativo portato avanti finora giunge verso la conclusione riallacciando tutte le culture passate in rassegna: la freccia diventa il simbolo di un

Questi pochi riferimenti, tuttavia, non rendono giustizia di una bibliografia sul tema che è estremamente ampia.

[30] Onians 1998, 421-425; Mazzucchelli – Bracali 2022, 31-32.

[31] È comunque di un certo interesse ricordare la tradizione islamica. Per il Corano (53: 9), il Profeta viene trasportato verso il Loto del Limite (*sidrat al-muntahā*) e una luce misteriosa lo conduce a una distanza di poco meno di due archi (*qāba qawsayn*) dal Trono divino. Mentre la mistica islamica studierà l'espressione nel tentativo di capire a che distanza massima l'uomo può avvicinarsi a Dio, per alcuni studiosi essa risalirebbe invece all'usanza preislamica per cui due individui solevano prestare giuramento nel nome di una divinità affiancando due archi. In proposito, Basharin 2012.

istante critico, eventualmente anche esiziale, che segna un brusco singhiozzo negli equilibri temporali.

La selezione della freccia come simbolo, fra i tanti possibili, del flusso temporale va ben al di là del perimetro geoculturale inerente al presente studio, perché è un procedimento mentale così forte che ha portato a radicarne l'uso in diverse discipline scientifiche e persino per la stessa rappresentazione fisica dello scorrere degli eventi.[32]

La rielaborazione semantica di un dominio astratto come il tempo, infatti, attiva altri domini che sono avvertiti come più concreti, ossia quelli spaziali.[33] Tale processo è stato oggetto di esperimenti con i quali i cognitivisti hanno dimostrato empiricamente come esista una mappatura mentale dei concetti di passato e futuro. Tali nozioni sono rappresentate con particolari posizioni e movimenti spaziali:[34] il movimento avanti↔indietro è maggiormente correlato a riferimenti evenemenziali allocentrici, mentre quello orizzontale sinistra-destra soprattutto a preferenze e progettualità in prima persona.[35] Se rappresentato in forma grafica, invece, il movimento assume una direzionalità che dipende dal sistema scrittorio della lingua del parlante se riferito al tempo (sinistra→destra o sinistra←destra) con un preciso posizionamento spaziale al livello cognitivo di ciò che precede e di ciò che segue,[36] mentre resta libero in tutte le direzioni (tranne che dall'alto verso il basso) per le relazioni di quantità e preferenze.[37]

[32] Price 1996; Stenger 2009.

[33] Lakoff – Johnson 1980.

[34] Casasanto, Boroditsky 2003; Radden 2004.

[35] Torralbo – Santiago – Lupiáñez 2006.

[36] Weger – Pratt 2008.

[37] Tversky – Kugelmass – Winter 1990. In particolare, i ricercatori avevano osservato che, per il dominio del tempo, la rappresentazione grafica seguiva un movimento da sinistra a destra presso i parlanti lingua inglese, da destra a sinistra per quelli di arabo, ed era misto ma con una lieve preponderanza da destra a sinistra per quelli di ebraico.

6. Conclusioni

La linearità della traiettoria della freccia ha un'immagine che ben si confà a una concezione vettoriale del tempo, pur con le cautele del caso dovute al dibattito sulla ciclicità del tempo nelle civiltà antiche e sull'introduzione di una visione lineare favorita dall'emergere dei monoteismi.

Se riconsideriamo la definizione di *azlam* riportata all'inizio di questo contributo, troviamo che Abū ʿAlī Marzūqī al-Iṣfahānī conclude sostenendo che *ad-dahr takrār l-layl wa-n-nahār* 'il tempo è una reiterazione della notte e del giorno'. La poesia araba più antica, in effetti, definiva la coppia notte/giorno come *al-ǧadīdāni* 'i due nuovi', a indicarne l'intrinseca ciclicità dell'alternanza perpetua, ma l'epiteto è concorrenziato da un ben più raro sinonimo *al-aṯramāni*. Un'iscrizione nordarabica (nota come KRS 2453) recentemente riconsiderata da Ahmad Al-Jallad, conterrebbe un poemetto di tre versi sulla battaglia fra Baal e Mōt ispirata al ciclo di Baal, in cui nello stesso verso compare sia <*mt*> (→ Mōt) sia <*ṯrm*>: nell'ipotesi che quest'ultimo termine possa essere accostato all'arabo *al-aṯramāni*, l'alternanza di notte e giorno finirebbe per costituire un ulteriore simbolismo del complesso concetto antico nel quale si sono affastellati tempo, fato e destino.[38]

Ma per spiegare *azlam*, si è detto che va considerata la freccetta, lo *zalam*. Su queste basi, viene da chiedersi se la pratica dell'oracolo non fosse vista come un tentativo di interferenza temporale attraverso lo strumento che più rappresentava la linearità e che più simboleggiava l'istante critico in cui il fato era segnato.

Non ci si potrà crucciare, allora, se la conclusione di questa disamina ricorrerà ora a un libro deuterocanonico. Sembra infatti che non avesse torto *Sapienza* (5: 12) che, a proposito della vita, spiegava: «È come una freccia scoccata contro un bersaglio: l'aria la lascia passare ma poi torna al posto di prima e il tracciato della freccia ti sfugge».

[38] Al-Jallad 2015.

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On the History of Tripoli Judeo-Arabic

LUCA D'ANNA

The present paper offers a historical reconstruction of Tripoli Judeo-Arabic, a variety that has been synchronically described by Yoda (2005), but whose atypical nature within the eastern Maghrebi context warrants further investigation. The paper provides a comparative analysis of selected traits of Tripoli Muslim and Jewish Arabic, explaining the reasons why the typical scenario of confessional variation does not apply to Tripoli. In its present form, in fact, Tripoli Judeo-Arabic is not the older sedentary variety spoken in Tripoli before the arrival of second-layer dialects. Quite to the contrary, it shares isoglosses with varieties of the western Maghreb. The paper advances the hypothesis that this is due to the disruption of the original community following the Spanish occupation of Tripoli in 1510. After these events, Sephardi Jews coming from Morocco migrated to Tripoli in large numbers and often assumed prominent roles within the community, which explains why traits usually associated with Moroccan or western Maghrebi dialects appear in Tripoli Judeo-Arabic.

Keywords: Arabic dialects – Maghrebi dialects – Judeo-Arabic – Libyan Arabic – Historical dialectology

1. Introduction

In 2009, on a warm Spring day, I nervously walked into Riccardo Contini's office, holding a notebook in my hand and ready to ask him about the syllabus of his Arabic Dialectology class. Much to my surprise, he asked me what I was interested in. I told him I had some proficiency in Libyan Arabic, due to my long-term internship at the Libyan Cultural Center in Palermo. Riccardo smiled, reached under his desk and showed me the Italian

(partial) translation of the famous *Highid Mordekhai*.[1] As I often saw him do in the following years, he tailored a syllabus revolving around my interests and, in doing so, he kindled a fire that would eventually lead me to undeservingly take his place as a professor of Arabic Dialectology at the University of Naples "L'Orientale". As I have said many times, everything I am as a scholar, I owe to him.

The study of Libyan Arabic has occupied a large part of my (admittedly short) career as an Arabic dialectologist. While Tripoli Muslim Arabic is the variety I learned to use in daily communication, the last few years have been spent investigating Libyan Judeo-Arabic dialects, whose only described variety was, in 2009, Tripoli Judeo-Arabic.[2] As I undertook the task of documenting and describing other varieties of Libyan Judeo-Arabic (henceforth, LJA), I was more and more puzzled by the enigma Tripoli Judeo-Arabic posed. My gift to Riccardo, thus, is a tentative reconstruction of how Tripoli Judeo-Arabic evolved and why it represents such an atypical variety of eastern Maghrebi Judeo-Arabic.

2. Confessional variation in Tripoli

Tripoli represents the only instance, within the context of Libyan Arabic, for which we have a full grammar of both the Muslim[3] and the Jewish variety.[4] The Libyan capital historically hosted a rich Jewish community, whose first mention goes back to the 4th century CE. Although data concerning the Jews of Tripoli throughout the ages are not plentiful, the community thrived under the Islamic rule and counted, at the beginning of the 20th century, 14000 souls.[5] After the Italian occupation of Libya, which

[1] Cohen 1928.

[2] Yoda 2005.

[3] Pereira 2010.

[4] Yoda 2005. Older descriptions of the Muslim variety are also available (Stumme 1898; Cesàro 1939). For other varieties of Libyan Arabic, no full-fledged grammars are available, but rather preliminary descriptions. The only exception is Owens' 1984 grammar of Eastern Libyan Arabic, which does not focus on the dialect of a specific community.

[5] Roumani 2009, 1.

they initially welcomed with favor, the situation of Tripoli Jews deteriorated during the Fascist regime, especially after the promulgation of the infamous Racial Laws in 1938, following which large numbers of Jews were deported in the concentration camp of Jadu.[6] Safety conditions for the Jews of Tripoli grew worse after the end of World War II and the establishment of the state of Israel. Pogroms broke out in 1945 and 1967, which ultimately led to the expulsion of the entire Jewish community from Libya.[7]

From a dialectological standpoint, Tripoli Muslim Arabic and Tripoli Judeo-Arabic are typologically distinct. Tripoli Muslim Arabic has been described by Pereira (2003) as a mixed variety, featuring both Bedouin and sedentary traits, a short selection of which will be here presented.

In the domain of phonology, the partly Bedouin nature of Tripoli Muslim Arabic (henceforth, TMA) is evident from the voiced realization of the etymological uvular stop *q → [g], e.g., *gāl* "PFV.say.3.M.SG", *gahwa* "coffee", *grīb* "close".[8] Interdental phonemes, on the contrary, are not preserved, unlike in Benghazi[9] and nomadic Fezzani dialects,[10] but rather merge with the corresponding stops, e.g., *tlāta* "three", *hāda* "this.M", *ḍuhr* "noon".[11] The etymological diphthongs *ay and *aw are monophthongized into [ē] and [ō] respectively, e.g., *lēl* "night", *bēn* "between", *yōm* "day", *lōn* "color".[12]

As far as morphology is concerned, Bedouin traits mainly include: the lack of long-vowel reconstruction in CCy verbs, e.g. *mšu* "PFV.go:3.M.PL", *yəmšu* "IPFV.3:go:PL"; the diminutive pattern *fʕēl* for triliterals, e.g. *klēb* "dog.DIM", *ulēd* "boy.DIM"; the pattern $C_1C_2āC_3īC_4$ for the plural of $C_1vC_2C_3v̄C_4$ quadriliteral nouns, e.g. *mfātīḥ* "key.PL", *srādīk* "rooster.PL"; the pattern $C_1C_2ēC_3īC_4$ for the

[6] Salerno 2012.
[7] D'Anna 2024.
[8] Pereira 2010, 75-76.
[9] Benkato 2014, 67-68.
[10] Caubet 2004, 71.
[11] Pereira 2010, 49-50.
[12] *Ibid.*, 34-35.

diminutive of $C_1vC_2C_3\bar{v}C_4$ quadriliteral nouns, e.g. e.g. *mfētīḥ* "key.DIM", *srēdīk* "rooster.DIM".[13]

Tripoli Judeo-Arabic, on the other hand, is a purely sedentary variety. It features a voiceless realization of the etymological uvular stop *q → [q], e.g. *qāl* "PFV.say.3.M.SG", *qāwa* "coffee", *qʁīb* "close".[14] Interdental phonemes are expectedly lost, and merge with the corresponding stops, e.g., *āda* "this.M", *ḍʁəb* "PFV.hit.3.M.SG".[15] Moreover, the voiceless alveolar stop /t/ undergoes affrication, resulting in [tʃ] (here transcribed as *č*), e.g. *bənč* "girl", *čāni* "other", *čəmma* "EXIST". As evident from the last two samples, the affrication also affects [t] when it derives from an etymological *θ.[16] TJA also features a uvular realization of etymological *r → [ʁ], e.g., *bḥəʁ* "sea", *səʁdūk* "rooster".[17] Finally, /h/ is subject to unsystematic loss, meaning that it is usually lost, but realized in slow and careful speech. The loss of /h/ gives rise to numerous compensatory phenomena, for which we refer the readers to Yoda.[18] The etymological diphthongs *ay and *aw are monophthongized into [ī] and [ū] respectively, e.g., *līl* "night", *bīn* "between", *yūm* "day", *lūn* "color".[19]

From a morphological perspective, TJA features long-vowel reconstruction in CCy verbs, e.g. *mšāw* "PFV.go.3.M.SG", *yəmšīw* "IPFV.3:go:PL".[20] The diminutive pattern for triliterals is the sedentary *fʕəyyəl*, e.g. *uləyyəd* "boy.DIM", *ṭrəyyəf* "piece.DIM", while for $C_1vC_2C_3\bar{v}C_4$ quadriliterals it is $C_1C_2\bar{e}C_3əC_4$, e.g. *mfētəḥ* "key.DIM", *srēdək* "rooster.DIM".[21] The plural pattern for $C_1vC_2C_3\bar{v}C_4$ quadriliteral nouns is $C_1C_2āC_3əC_4$, i.e. *mfātəḥ* "key.PL", *srādək* "rooster.PL".[22]

[13] Pereira 2003, 436-437.
[14] Yoda 2005, 58.
[15] *Ibid.*, 53.
[16] The affrication of /t/ → [č] is blocked by its cooccurrence with some consonants, which will be not dealt with here. See Yoda 2005, 71-72.
[17] *Ibid.*, 59.
[18] *Ibid.*, 75-79.
[19] *Ibid.*, 92.
[20] *Ibid.*, 164-165.
[21] *Ibid.*, 244-245.
[22] *Ibid.*, 242.

Sociolinguistic information about the employment of confessional varieties is unfortunately lacking and impossible to obtain, since the last Jews left Libya in 1967. From interviews conducted in recent years with surviving members of the Jewish community, however, it appears that TJA was confined to intra-confessional verbal exchanges, while Jewish speakers regularly resorted to TMA when speaking to Muslims.[23]

3. Tripoli Judeo-Arabic in the context of eastern first-layer Arabic dialects

While TMA represents a typical instance of an eastern Maghrebi mixed variety, TJA stands out as the one odd out among sedentary varieties of Libya and Tunisia. From a phonological perspective, both the affricated realization of /t/ and the uvular realization of /r/ are quite unusual traits.

The affricated realization of /t/ → [tʃ] is limited, in Libya, to TJA and the surrounding varieties, to which it most likely spread due to contact. It is completely absent in Tunisian Muslim and Jewish varieties, although affrication of /t/ to [ts] is reported for Nabeul[24] and Tozeur, where [tʃ] is also occasionally heard.[25] As we move further west, [tʃ] starts being more common in Algerian dialects, both Muslim and Jewish.[26] In Moroccan Arabic, /t/ → [tʃ] is attested in different dialects, such as Meknes and Casablanca.[27] Even in the context of Maghrebi Judeo-Arabic, Chetrit only mentions the occurrence of affricate [ts] in Meknes JA[28] and Sefrou.[29]

The situation is similar with regard to the uvular realization of /r/. This feature is not attested in Tunisian and Algerian Arabic,[30] including Algiers Judeo-Arabic.[31] In order to find dialects

[23] D'Anna 2024.
[24] Dallaji 2016, 153.
[25] Saada 1984, 23-26.
[26] Marçais 1957, 221-227.
[27] Ziamari et al. 2020, 32-33.
[28] Chetrit 2015, 7, 32
[29] Stillman 1988, 31-32.
[30] Grand'Henry 2006, 54-55.
[31] Cohen 1912, 27.

featuring the uvular realization [ʁ], one needs to look at Moroccan dialects, such as Fes[32] and Tetouan.[33] The trait appears to be an old feature, nowadays in recession, replaced by the koine realization [r].

The typological oddities of TJA do not stop at phonology, but extend to morphology as well. In particular, TJA features resyllabification rules that diverge from Tripoli Muslim Arabic and from what we observe in Tunisia and Libya in general. Adding a vowel suffix to verbs in the prefixal conjugation, in fact, results in the occurrence of a short vowel in an open unstressed syllable, which is not allowed in largest majority of Maghrebi Arabic dialects:[34]

> *yə́k-təb* "IPFV.3:write.M.SG" + *-u* "PL" → *yə́k-tə-bu, where where *tə* is an open unstressed syllable containing a short vowel.

TMA, like most Libyan and Tunisian varieties, resolves the issue by dropping the second syllable, keeping the stress on the prefix and inserting an epenthetic vowel to break the consonantal cluster whenever the dialect does not tolerate it: yə́k-tə-bu → yə́k-tbu → yə́k-tbu → yə́-kət-bu. These resolution rules are common to Libya, Tunisia, Bedouin Algerian dialects and Algerian dialects of the Oran plateaus.[35]

TJA, on the other hand, drops the stressed vowel of the prefix and completely changes the syllable structure: *yə́k-tə-bu → i-kə́t-bu*. This feature is usually observed in dialects of the western Maghreb, particularly in Morocco, Djidjel and the north Constantine area, but not in Tunisia and Libya.[36]

In the domain of pronominal morphology, 2nd person subject pronouns similarly feature a shift in stress position, which results

[32] Díaz Oti 2016, 49-50.

[33] Singer 1958, 110; Vicente 2009, 196.

[34] Marçais 1977, 26.

[35] Marçais 1977, 28-29.

[36] Marçais 1977, 28-29. Very rare instances of this realization have been located in Tunisian Judeo-Arabic dialects. Personal research.

in the loss of the initial unstressed vowel and in the emergence of monosyllabic pronouns: *nča* "2.M.SG", *nči* "2.F.SG", *nčəm* "2.PL".

This bundle of clearly recognizable isoglosses makes TJA stand out in sharp contrast with TMA. In Blanc's terms, we are here dealing with a case of major differentiation,[37] which can also be observed at a sociolinguistic level. The marked phonological isoglosses of TJA, in fact, were stigmatized not only by Muslim speakers, but also by speakers of those varieties of Libyan Judeo-Arabic that did not feature them. Speakers of Benghazi Judeo-Arabic, for instance, maintained that TJA was not even a Libyan native variety, but rather a dialect "imported" from Tunisia. See the following excerpt:

> *fa-šīnu ṣār? ənna l-yahūd əṭ-ṭrābəlsiyya, amta yədwu yədwu bə-l-… lahža taqrīban tūnsiyya, mūš lībiyya miyya bə-l-miyya. Tūnəs fi Tūnəs u Lībya fi Lībya. u-baʕdēn fī- wāždīn mən-hom ənna ṭalgā-həm ənna ʕənd-om əʁ-ʁā, ər-rā əlli hiyya ʁā, ʁā. fī-ha sabab: aktar-əm, tmānīn fi l-miyya līš ʕənd-om əʁ-ʁā? li-ʔanna əl-ʔumm wə-l-ʔab mā-yədwū-š əl-īṭāli aw l-inglīzi, yədwu bass əl-luġa l-ʕarabiyya, kānu yədwu bə-l-luġa l-ʕarabiyya ṭabʕan yahūdiyya ṭrābəlsiyya. fa-mūš […] fi l-ḥōš ənna ənna yəsmʕu l-īṭāli, aw l-inglīzi, l-fransāwi, zeyy-na nəḥna. u-, u-amta tšūf wāḥəd bə-ʁ-ʁa hāda ṭrābəlsi, mā-yafhem-š, mən Bənġāzi mā-fī-š ḥad ʕənd-a ʁ-ʁā.* (Simon Bedussa, Benghazi)
>
> And what happened? That Tripoli Jews, when they speak, speak a dialect that is almost Tunisian, not 100% Libyan. Tunisia in Tunisia, and Libya in Libya. Then, a lot of them have the *ʁā*, the *rā* that is [realized as] *ʁā*, *ʁā*. There is a reason: most of them, 80%, why do they have the *ʁā*? Because their mothers and fathers did not speak Italian or English, they used to speak only Arabic, they used to speak in Arabic, Jewish Tripolitanian obviously. So, not… in houses where one could hear Italian, English or French, like us. And, when you see someone with the *ʁā*, that one is from Tripoli, he doesn't understand, in Benghazi there is nobody who has the *ʁā*.

In stigmatizing the most saliently marked traits of TJA, Benghazi Jews echoed the words of the late Libyan leader Muammar

[37] Blanc 1964, 16.

Gaddafi, who repeated that Libyan Jews were outsiders on several interviews.

From a purely dialectological perspective, however, TJA truly represents an oddity, even more so when we look at it in relation with TMA. As we have seen in §2, in fact, Tripoli Muslim Arabic is a mixed variety, born out of contact between a more recent Bedouin second-layer variety and an older first-layer sedentary substrate.[38] When two or more confessional varieties are spoken in a single town, minority varieties usually (even though not always) represent the older stratum. This is due to the process that usually leads to the emergence of confessional varieties, and which can be summarized as follows, although alternative scenarios do exist:[39]

1. Dialect A is spoken in a given community by all speakers, irrespectively of their religion or confession. The community, however, experiences a certain degree of residential segregation, so that people belonging to different religious groups live in different neighborhoods;
2. Newcomers, speakers of dialect B, move to / occupy the town where dialect A was spoken. Such speakers are usually Muslim, so they settle in the areas where Muslims live;
3. Language contact between speakers of dialect A and speakers of dialect B occurs, giving rise to a new dialect. Alternatively, if speakers of dialect A no longer exist, dialect B replaces dialect A completely;
4. In the neighborhoods where minorities live, contact with speakers of dialect B is limited, so that dialect A survives, but has now become a confessional variety.

If that be the case in Tripoli, we would expect TJA to represent the older, urban variety once spoken in all of Tripoli. There is, however, a very convincing counterargument that makes this

[38] The term first- and second-layer dialects are drawn from Benkato 2019 and replace the outdated pre-Hilali and Hilali.

[39] Al-Wer et al. 2015; Holes 2019.

hypothesis highly unlikely. As already said in §2, Pereira described Tripoli Muslim Arabic as a mixed variety, featuring both Bedouin and sedentary traits.[40] A partial list of the sedentary traits featured by Tripoli Muslim Arabic in the domains of phonology and morphology is provided below:

Phonology

- Loss of the interdental phonemes /θ/, /ð/ and /ðˤ/, which merged with the corresponding stops /t/, /d/ and /dˤ/;[41]
- Sedentary vowel system, in which two short brief vowels are preserved: /ə/, deriving from the merger of /a/ and /i/, vs /u/;[42]

Morphology

- Loss of gender distinction in the plural of verbs and pronouns: *yəkətbu* "IPFV.3:write:PL".

Comparing the sedentary traits of Tripoli Muslim Arabic with the actual sedentary dialect represented by Tripoli Judeo-Arabic immediately shows that there is no correspondence between these traits. Admittedly, TJA lost the interdental phonemes, yet the etymological /θ/, after merging with the corresponding stop, underwent affrication. On the contrary, no affrication exists in TMA. As far as vowels are concerned, TMA features two short vowels, /ə/ and /u/, while TJA has only one vocalic phoneme, /ə/.

In the domain of morphology, although Tripoli Muslim Arabic lost gender distinction in the plural of verbs and pronouns, the resolution rules for syllabic intolerance are different in the two dialects, i.e. *yəkətbu* (TMA) vs *ikətbu* (TJA) "IPFV.3:write:PL". The two sets of subject pronouns are also different, since TJA features monosyllabic 2nd person pronouns (e.g. *nča* "2.M.SG"), while TMA has disyllabic pronouns (e.g. *ənta* "2.M.SG").

[40] Pereira 2003.
[41] *Ibid.*, 434.
[42] *Ibid.*

More in general, none of the atypical traits observed in Tripoli Judeo-Arabic has parallels in Tripoli Muslim Arabic. The lack of *imāla*, the uvular realization of /r/, the monosyllabic subject pronouns are all but absent from Tripoli Muslim Arabic.

The sharp differences between the sedentary component of Tripoli Muslim Arabic and the correspondent traits of Tripoli Judeo-Arabic make it very difficult to maintain that TJA might have been, at least in its present form, the sedentary variety once spoken in the city. As a matter of fact, the mountain dialects of Yefren[43] and Msellata[44] are typologically much closer to TMA than TJA is.

4. Tripoli Judeo-Arabic in its historical context

The oddities of TJA appear in a different light when looking at the history of the Jewish community of Tripoli. Mentions of Jewish settlements in the area of current Tripoli go back to the 4th century CE, when Roman sources indicate the existence of a Jewish community in the area.[45] The community continued to thrive under the Arab-Islamic rule, but sources are quite scarce until the 16th century, which is a pivotal time for the Jews of Tripoli and of Northern Africa as a whole.

At the beginning of the 16th century, approximately 800 Jewish families lived in Tripoli,[46] but the conditions of the community deteriorated rapidly. In 1510, in fact, the Spaniards conquered Tripoli, which led the Jewish community to flee the town and seek shelter on the mountains and in those towns, such as Misrata, which had not been occupied. In 1530, Tripoli passed to the Knights of Malta,[47] which didn't improve the conditions of the Jews still living there. Even after the Muslims, led by Dorghūt Basha, reconquered the town in 1551,[48] only 40 Jews were left in

[43] D'Anna 2021.
[44] D'Anna 2024.
[45] *Ibid.*.
[46] Simon 1992, 92.
[47] Rossi 1968, 125-126.
[48] *Ibid.*, 138.

town, and the families who had moved elsewhere did not return en masse.[49] In light of this fact, it is safe to maintain that the continuity of the Jewish settlement in Tripoli was interrupted and the community ceased to exist in its original form. This, in turn, means that the ancient Judeo-Arabic of Tripoli is irremediably lost to us.

Once life conditions grew safer again under the Ottoman rule, however, Jews started resettling in Tripoli. From the 16th to the 17th century, the town witnessed a steady inflow of Sephardi Jews hailing from the Iberian Peninsula, many of whom had spent considerable time in Moroccan towns such as Fes. The famous *Highid Mordekhai* mentions 191 family names for the community of Tripoli, and a quarter of them are of clear Iberian origins (Laredo, Molkho, Farfara, Cassuto, Guetta, Lombrozo, Lavi, Lahmayesh, Abarbanel, Montefiori, Gorni, Curiel, Nunes Vais, Magnagi).[50] In many cases, families whose name was not evidently Sephardi added the acronym S.T. (*Sepharadi ṭahor* "Genuine Sephardi"), which can help us gauge the extent of the Iberian influence on the social fabric of the new Jewish community of Tripoli:

> Sephardi settlers set the tone in religious development, were often influential spiritual leaders, and frequently held important economic positions and consequently became role models for cultural inclination, social behavior, and political orientation.[51]

The importance of the Sephardi element in the formation of the new Jewish community of Tripoli is attested by the local traditions surrounding the figure of Shimon Lavi. Shimon Lavi (1486-1585) was an Andalusi Jew born in the Iberian Peninsula and expelled, together with his family, in 1492. Like many other Andalusi Jews, Shimon Lavi resettled in the Moroccan town of Fes, but later decided to migrate to Palestine. While attempting his *aliyah*, however, he was kidnapped by brigands and released in Tripoli.

[49] D'Anna 2024.
[50] *Ibid.*
[51] Simon 1992, 90.

Once there, he was moved to pity by the poor state of the Libyan Jewry, so he decided to stop there and devote his life to the restoration of proper Jewish customs in Libya.[52] In time, Shimon Lavi's prestige became so great that his tomb represented a site of pilgrimage for North African Jews as a whole. While Shimon Lavi's story can be taken at face value, it probably contains hints at the role of Sephardi Jews in the rebuilding of the Jewish community of Tripoli.

The story of Shimon Lavi in Tripoli, moreover, is not an isolated case. In Misrata, for instance, the tomb of Rabbi Yehi'el Trabot, an Andalusi scholar who died in 1569, was visited by both Jews and Muslims.[53]

The influence of the Sephardi Jews who moved to Tripoli (and to other North African towns) extended well beyond religious matters, as evident from the following quote:

> Following the 1492 expulsion, an unknown number of Jews from Spain came to settle in Tripoli. Muslim dignitaries were glad to see them come because they were knowledgeable in science, trade and industry, and state affairs, and very loyal to the Muslim regime. Consequently, some Sephardim received official positions, and their influence in Tripoli started to resemble that which they had had in Spain. The Jewish community grew fast and prospered, and its cultural level improved.[54]

Looking at this situation from a sociolinguistic perspective, it is clear that the Sephardi newcomers represent the most likely source of the linguistic innovations observed in Tripoli Judeo-Arabic. Given that a real Jewish community no longer existed in town after 1510, it is even dubious that the process can be described in terms of a spread of innovations from one social group to another. More probably, we are here dealing with a case of new dialect formation involving the few remaining Jewish

[52] D'Anna 2024.
[53] Simon 1992, 106.
[54] *Ibid.*, 92.

speakers from the original community and the host of immigrants that arrived starting from the 16th century.

The domain of new-dialect formation has drawn extensively from Trudgill's work on colonial English,[55] whose principles have been successfully applied to new-dialect formation in both the Arabic-speaking world[56] and the Arab diaspora.[57] Trudgill argues

> […] that which features speakers accommodate to in the speech of others can be accounted for by salience. In general, it is salient features – those which are 'noticed' […] by speakers – which are accommodated to. I shall argue below that, in fact, salience is not relevant at most stages of the new-dialect formation process. However, this does not apply to rudimentary levelling, where accommodation would have operated in the normal way amongst adults, and salience could have been a factor.[58]

In the stage of rudimentary levelling, thus, the features that were both marked and used by members of a privileged social class would be the ones that other speakers accommodate to, ultimately surviving to the final stage of new-dialect formation.[59] This would explain how extremely marked traits, such as the affrication of /t/ and the uvular realization of /r/, were preserved in an area where neither Muslim nor Judeo-Arabic dialects feature these isoglosses.

5. Conclusions

In this brief paper, a sketch of the possible origin and evolution of Tripoli Judeo-Arabic has been suggested, based on the data at our disposal. Our starting point is represented by the atypical nature of TJA in the context of both Muslim and Judeo-Arabic

[55] Trudgill 2004.
[56] Al-Wer 2007.
[57] D'Anna 2018.
[58] Trudgill 2004, 93.
[59] According to Trudgill 2004, 84-89, the stages of new-dialect formation can be summarized as follows: Stage I: rudimentary leveling and interdialect development; Stage II: variability and apparent leveling in new-dialect formation; Stage III: determinism in new-dialect formation.

varieties of Libya and Tunisia. While confessional varieties usually represent a reliable window on the linguistic past of a community, we explained why this might not be the case with regard to Tripoli Jewish and Muslim Arabic. Tripoli Muslim Arabic is a mixed variety, yet the sedentary traits it displays never match the corresponding isoglosses in Tripoli Judeo-Arabic, aligning more nicely with the more conservative mountain varieties of Yefren and Msellata. On the other hand, the atypical traits in Tripoli Judeo-Arabic, such as affrication of /t/, uvular realization of /r/ and resolution rules for syllabic intolerance, have parallels in varieties of the western Maghreb, specifically Morocco. The research question we have tried to answer in this paper, thus, is why a variety allegedly belonging to the eastern Eqa:l group according to Chetrit shares features with typologically very different varieties.[60]

The answer appears to lie in the complex history of the Jewish community of Tripoli, whose continuity was interrupted in 1510 by the Spanish occupation, which led almost all of the Jews to leave town and find shelter in the mountains. Once the original community was disrupted, Sephardi immigration from Morocco played a pivotal role in the reconstruction of the Jewish community of Tripoli as it was known until 1967, the year in which the last Jews were forced to leave the country. The presence of isoglosses linking Tripoli Judeo-Arabic to varieties of the western Maghreb, thus, is reasonably explained on socio-historical grounds, also considering the prominent roles that many Sephardi Jews assumed in Tripoli.

As this brief paper draws to an end, due to space constraints, I feel like I have at last completed my Arabic Dialectology exam. It took me fifteen years, but it seems like it only started yesterday. All along the road, I could not have wished for a better mentor.

[60] Cherit 2015.

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Narrative Styles in Negev Arabic and in Kufur Kanna[*]

RONI HENKIN- ROITFARB

The present paper investigates some so far underresearched stylistic features of personal narratives in Palestinian Arabic, with a specific focus on Negev Arabic (NA), a Bedouin variety, and Kufr Kanna Arabic (KKA), a rural one. The study is based on a corpus of ten stories in Negev Arabic and ten in Kufr Kanna Arabic, yielding interesting and innovative results. The personal narrative texts in Negev Arabic tend to be close to the traditional Negev Bedouin legend style, using the narrative tenses and typical foregrounders of the so-called 'Nabaṭi bundle', namely narrative imperative, motion verb compounds and ethic dative. In contrast, these are all absent from the Kufr Kanna texts, richer in evaluative segments and more explicit past time markers, both contributing to making the text more explicit and coherent for rural audiences that are not familiar with the traditional Bedouin narrative style.

Keywords: Palestinian Arabic – Negev Arabic – Kufr Kanna Arabic – Narrative styles – Artistic Colloquial Arabic

1. Arabic dialects in Israel

Palestinian Arabic (PA) is very heterogeneous, and includes all the types and sub-types of dialects within the traditional classification of Arabic dialects into two main types: sedentary vs. nomadic (or Bedouin), with the former sub-classifying to urban

[*] This contribution is dedicated with highest regard to Prof. Riccardo Contini, a most prominent scholar and very dear friend.

and rural.[1] The urban dialects in Israel include those of Jerusalem, Nazareth and Haifa; rural dialects are found, for example, in the so-called Triangle in Central Israel, the Carmel coast and the Galilee in the north. The traditionally nomadic, now settled, Bedouin dialects are of two distinct types: those of the North belong to the Syro-Mesopotamian dialect group,[2] whereas those of the South belong to Negev Arabic, originating in the North-West Arabian dialect group.

This basic classification has subsequently been elaborated. For example, Blanc discussed distinct communal Arabic dialects within one location, such as Muslim and Jewish dialects of Baghdad.[3] Rosenhouse suggested further sociolinguistic criteria in addition to those of traditional lifestyle, geographical location, and religion.[4] She highlighted the importance of age, gender, literacy or education, profession and genre; and in the case of Israel, of course, degree of immersion in the Hebrew-speaking environment of the Jewish majority. The dialects sampled here are the predominant varieties of the Negev, labeled here Negev Arabic, and of Kufr (Kufur, Kafr) Kanna.

Negev Arabic (NA) is of two main types: the original Bedouin dialects of the many Bedouin families on the one hand, with several dialectal differences between them;[5] and, on the other hand, Bedouinized peasant dialects.[6] Here we limit the analysis to the pure Bedouin type, as spoken by the elderly of this group.

Kufr Kanna (KK) is a village in the Lower Galilee, north of Nazareth, with approximately 25,000 inhabitants of which 75% are Muslims, the rest Christians (Local Council internet site 25.12.2024). The dialectal system there is extremely interesting in

[1] Rosenhouse 2008: 35 ff. The conventional term PA includes just sedentary dialects of the southern portion of the Greater Syria area, classified under the Syro-Lebanese group. In the present article, following Shahin 2008, and for the sake of convenience, I include the Bedouin dialects in Israel under PA.

[2] Rosenhouse 1982; 1984.

[3] Blanc 1964.

[4] Rosenhouse 2008.

[5] Blanc 1970; Shawarbah 2007; 2012.

[6] Henkin 2010, Chapter 4.

sociolinguistic terms.[7] Kufr Kanna Arabic (KKA) studied here is the Muslim variety, which has been classified as a rural PA dialect with many Bedouinisms, such as the Bedouin [*g*]-allophone of Standard Arabic */q/*. This mix was explained as either a residue of the Bedouin origin of the first settlers[8] or as a chain of processes: a historically bedouinized sedentary dialect later undergoing re-sedentarization.[9] Today some Bedouin families live in distinct neighborhoods established by 1948 refugees from Galilean Bedouin clans such as Nujedāt and Ṣbēḥāt. But their speech today is not distinct from that of the rural Muslim community.[10]

2. Stylistic analysis of personal narratives

The present paper is innovative in focusing on stylistic features of personal narratives which, to the best of my knowledge, have not yet been studied in any Arabic dialect. Most research on NA narrative style, for example, has focused on the prototypical gendered genres of traditional oral narrative: on the one hand men's historical legends and tribal history and, on the other hand, women's fantastic, unrealistic folktales. These genres are typically

[7] Omar 2018; Omar et al. 2021; Zu'bi 2022. Fatina Omar wrote an unpublished MA final paper (Omar 2018) on narrative uses of the imperfective *yafʕal* in KKA, the main findings of which were later published in Omar et al. 2021. I thank Fatina for letting me use her transcribed and translated corpus.

[8] Omar 2018, 8.

[9] Zu'bi 2022, 683, 687 ff. In the most updated dialectal Atlas of our area, KKA is classified as «a ruralite dialect with Bedouin features, with */g/ – /ž/*» and «here Muslim and Christian men use */g/*, younger Christian women */ʔ/*... interdentals also distinguish the Muslim and Christian varieties» (Behnstedt – Geva-Kleinberger 2019, 137, 421, 441). The Christian (mainly young female) variety of KKA (ignored here) is of the areal urban type, characterized by the glottal stop *ʔ*-allophone of Standard Arabic */q/* (Omar et al.,163) and absence of both interdentals and optional fm.pl. verbal and pronominal forms. A typically urban feature which, however, is common to both Muslims and Christians in KK, is fricative [*ž*] (for affricate */j/*).

[10] Zu'bi 2022, 666.

represented in 3rd person (P3) narratives whereas our stories are all in 1st person (P1).[11]

2.1 Narrative structure and tenses

Analysis of narrative structure distinguishes between the properly narrative or diegetic mode (telling) from the performative or mimetic mode (showing) which includes direct speech and asides;[12] and from the mode of evaluation that exits from the narrative frame and interacts with the listener.[13] We will show narrative tenses in the three basic layers of narrative: background, plotline, and foreground in our two PA dialects, NA and KKA. The vernacular tense system in both these PA dialects is based on the two simple verbal forms:[14]

> perfective *faʕal* (F) for complete actions, mainly in the past;
> imperfective *yafʕal* (Y) for incomplete actions, mainly in the non-past, i.e. present or future; also for habitual actions or progression in the past; the indicative mood is marked by the prefix *b-*.

In addition, the participle (P) *fāʕil* designates states, complete or incomplete depending on the lexical aspect or verbal Aktionsart. Verbal compounds, consisting of an auxiliary and a content verb, serve for specification of the action as, for example, future, progressing, initiating, continuing, or repeated (iterative). These auxiliaries, like the forms themselves, vary somewhat among the PA dialects.

[11] Over the years I dedicated several studies to oral narrative styles, especially issues of tense switching, in NA of men, women, and children, and as contrasting with narrative styles in sedentary dialects, such as that of Bir-Zet (Henkin 1994; 1996; 1998; 2000/1; 2002).

[12] Fleischman 1990, 113.

[13] Labov 1972.

[14] With allomorphic variants such as F-forms *fiʕil fuʕul* and Y-forms *yifʕal* and *yufʕul*.

3. Corpus and method

For the comparative analysis I took ten texts of personal stories from my NA corpus and ten from KK (five men and 5 women from each), with approximately the same number of words (5,550). I tried to compile a corpus of comparable texts in terms of genre, gender and age group. Unfortunately, the age factor could not be controlled for, as we have no elderly KKA speakers, and not enough young NA speakers recounting personal stories. So the KKA-speakers' age range is 20-40,[15] whereas the age range of the NA speakers was 57-90, averaging 63.

I limit analysis to the diegetic layer, so I excluded (from both the word count and analysis) mimetic layer elements such as direct speech, evaluation, and asides. We will now see the tenses of the three diegetic narrative layers – background, plotline and foreground – in our two dialects.

4. Analysis

4.1 Background tenses

Background tenses feature primarily in Orientation segments of narrative structure,[16] also along the story when depicting off-plotline events and states. In terms of tenses, they classify to two: explicit past on the one hand vs. implicit past via non-past forms on the other hand. The former is of course grammatically more transparent as past, and is obligatory in Standard Arabic, at least in an opening clause. The past time marker is typically the F-form of the existence verb *kān* 'be', in its roles as an existence verb, a copula or an auxiliary verb.

In PA narrative styles the past marker is not compulsory, and the scene can be presented as present or atemporal. We find, however, that the KKA-backgrounds in our corpus typically employ at least one initial occurrence of the past time marker,

[15] Omar 2018, 17.
[16] Henkin 2002, 289.

primarily the existence verb *kān* 'be' in the F-form, as in Standard Arabic. In (1), opening a personal KKA story, the narrator recounts his childhood dream to own a bike, as background to the main story of how the dream came true. In this opening we see four tokens of the verb 'be' in the F-form in three independent clauses depicting past states, followed by a content clause expressing the content of the child's dream:

(1) kunt[F] ṭifl ⁱzġīr
I.was[F] child young
I was a young child

w-kunt[F] b-iṣ-ṣaff it-tāni [...],
and-I.was[F] in-the-grade the-2nd [...]
and I was in 2nd grade

w-kunt[F] ktīr ḥābib[P]
and-I.was[F] very.much longing[P]
and I very much desired

ʔinnu ykūn[Y] ʕind-i busuklēti la-ʔili
that it.will.be[Y] with-me bicycle to-my.own
to have a bicycle of my own [KKA-M][17]

Non-past background forms are less 'grammatical', more vernacular than the standard forms. Their function is to concretize the background as 'here and now'. These non-past predications include nominal clauses, participles, and *(b)Y* forms and are the prototypical opening forms in the NA narrative style, e.g. 'once upon a time there is a man, he is brave, he lives in…'. They are not limited to the initial orientation segment. (2) is from the middle of a personal story of a 57-year-old NA woman:

(2) xaṭabō[F] -nīʰ w-aná jæhlih
they.engaged[F] -me and-I young
they announced my engagement while I was young

[17] The numbered examples refer to the text and gender of the narrator. So [KKA-M] refers to a male narrator from Kufr Kanna.

yaʕniy	ʕumṛ-ī	yimkin	xamsṭaʕš
that.is	age-my	possibly	15

I was like 15 [NA-F]

The opening plotline event 'they announced my engagement' is followed by a background circumstantial nominal clause (known in Arabic grammar as a *ḥāl*-clause), lit. 'and I am young', followed by an additional evaluative nominal 'my age is possibly 15'.

A count of predications in background segments (both initial and non-initial) of our two corpora shows that explicit past tense, primarily in the form of the existence verb *kān* 'was',[18] is typical of the KKA-texts, whereas NA backgrounds showed a clear opposite preference for non-past predications:

	NA	KKA
past marker *kān/ baga*	17	47
non-past	93	50

Table 1: Background tenses: explicit past vs. non-past

Plotline tenses

The basic plotline tense in both corpora is the simple past (F), which is the only non-foregrounding plotline form for single consecutive events. In (3) the narrator comes to the hospital to see his newborn daughter, extracted in a vacuum operation:

(3) ažu[F] ʕimlu[F] ʕamaliyyih
they.came[F] they.performed[F] operation
they came and performed an operation

w-ʔaṭlaʕu[F] il-binit [...] w-nadū[F] -ni
and-they.took.out[F] the-girl [...] and-they.called[F] -me

faržū[F] -ni wižih-ha bass, w-rāḥu[F].
they.showed[F] -me face-her only and-they.went[F]
they just showed me her face and went off. [KKA-M]

[18] Or the rural existence verb *baka* (KKA *baga)* lit. 'remain' (Shachmon – Marmorstein 2021).

For repetitive events on the plotline, however, the iterative non-past (*b*)Y was also frequent, especially in the NA texts. Despite their non-past reference, these forms counted as plotline because they move the plot forward. Their effect is concretizing, but they are not foregrounders. A 58-year-old NA-speaker recounts how she used to go out to work with two baby girls:

(4) lōmin ṣāran[F] banāt ṯintēn
When they.became[F] girls two
When I had two girls (i.e. after my second birth)

baṛūḥ[iter.*b*Y] ⁱb-hin
I.go[iter.*b*Y] with-them
I would go with them

w-aḥuṭṭ[iter.Y] -hin ʕ-al-ḥmāṛ
and-I.put[iter.Y] -them on-the-donkey
and I would put them on a donkey

w-ʔaríd[iter.Y]
and-I.go.to.water.source[iter.Y]
and I would go to fetch water

w-ajīb[iter.Y] ál-miy mn-al-haṛāb
and-I.bring[iter.Y] the-water from-the-cisterns
and I would bring the water from the cisterns [NA-F]

The plotline F-form numbers for single consecutive events were rather similar in the two corpora, but the iterative plotline forms that were rendered as non-past, rather than the referential past, were almost 9 times more numerous in the NA texts, in keeping with the general concretizing present tense tendency of the Bedouin narrative style:

	NA	KKA
F for single plotline events	210	188
(*b*)Y for iterative plotline events	44	5

Table 2: Plotline tenses: past vs. non-past

4.2 Foregrounding tenses

Foregrounders are concretizing elements, drawing the events from their narrative past time reference to the concrete here and now, in what can be visualized as a slide show fashion alternating with the movie-like progression of the plotline.[19] Two most prominent crosslinguistic foregrounders, common to both our PA dialects, are the Narrative Present and Presentatives.

The Narrative Present is a foregrounder typical of oral narrative crosslinguistically. In PA dialects it is the Narrative Imperfect (*b*)Y. In (5) a 58-year-old NA man recalls a fight they once had with locals near Lydda, while outside the Negev in a period of seasonal labor:

(5) w-lamma xaḷḷasna[F] ḥiṣīdih,
and-when we.finished[F] harvest
and when we finished the harvest,

f-al-lēl biytakāwanaw[*b*Y] al-ḥaṛṛāṭīn,
at-the-night they.fight[*b*Y] the-plowers
at night the plowers get (=got) into a fight,

w-ibyuḏ^{u}rbuw[*b*Y] ʕIlíy Šḥædih,ḥaṛṛāṭ n-naʔ.
and-they.strike[*b*Y] ʕIliy Šḥādih, plower of-ours
and (the locals) hit ʕIliy Šḥādih, a plower of ours. [NA-M]

A syndetic analytic variant opens with the conjunction 'and' followed by the subject and the (*b*)Y verb. In (6) the narrator describes how, as a young girl out with the sheep, she burst out crying upon realizing that she was being kidnapped to be married:

(6) w-aná aṭubb[Y] aṣayyiḥ[Y]
and-I I.burst.out[Y] I.cry[Y]
and I burst out crying

[19] Henkin 2002, 291.

w-aná ajiy[Y] aṭubb[Y] aṣayyiḥ[Y],
and-I I.come[Y] I.burst.out[Y] I.cry[Y]
and I come (=came) and burst out crying,

u-humma yāxḏū[Y] -nī
and-they they.take[Y] -me
and they take (=took) me [NA-F]

This syndetic analytic variant is particularly frequent in the narrative styles of NA women and children.[20] It did not occur in the KKA-texts.

Presentatives present a surprising scene as appearing before the protagonist's eyes in a very concrete manner, much like Fr. *voilà*, Old English 'Lo and behold'. Presentative particles common to both our PA dialects include *walla* and *willa,* whereas *win* and *wlin* are used only in NA. In (7) the KKA-narrator recalls how she was walking with some family members along the road, saw a crowd gathered round a road accident, walked on a bit before hearing that the person hit was their brother. The scene unfolding before their eyes, people pronouncing their brother's name, is presented via a presentative particle (coded as PRSV) and a present tense verb 'they are saying':

(7) ḍallēna[F] māšyīn[P] baʕd ⁱšway,
we.continued[F] walking[P] more a.little
we walked on a little more

walla hinni bigūlu[*ɒ*Y]
PRSV they say[*ɒ*Y]
and there they are (=were), saying…[KKA-F]

As we see in (7), a verb following a presentative particle is typically in a concrete non-past [*ɒ*Y] form; nominal predication is likewise common. Both function to concretize the scene as 'here and now.'

Although these two concretizing foregrounders, as crosslinguistic narrative features, are common to both our narrative styles, their frequency is very different in the two corpora:

[20] Henkin 1998, 54; 2002, 292.

	NA	KKA
Narrative Present *(b)Y*	36	2
Presentatives	18	3

Table 3: Foregrounders: Narrative Present and Presentatives

In addition to these foregrounding elements shared by our two PA dialects, NA uses several that belong to the language of the Bedouin oral narrative-poetic tradition, known as Artistic colloquial Arabic,[21] naturally absent from the sedentary KKA dialect. We shall show here an example of three concretizing performative features, typical of Bedouin men's oral legends, as interspersed with oral poetry, known as the Nabaṭi narrative-poetic tradition.[22] These three features constitute what may be called 'the Nabaṭi bundle.'[23]

4.3 Narrative Imperative

By using imperatives [IMPT] instead of plotline past forms, the narrator acts like a stage director delivering instructions to the protagonists.[24] In (8) the narrator recalls how, as a young shepherd, he was in the area of Lydda, and a local tough guy attacked the shepherding lads:

(8) ṭabb[F] f-al-lād w-kattil[IMPT] -hum
he.attacked[F] at-the-lads and-punch (repeatedly) [IMPT] -them
he attacked the lads and beat them up [NA-M]

Ethical dative

The ethical dative is known in languages of several families, such as German *bleib mir gesund*, lit. 'stay well for me', Yiddish, Latin,

[21] Palva 1992
[22] Palva 1991, 62 ff.
[23] Henkin 2002, 293 ff.
[24] Henkin 2002, 294.

Romanian, Serbian, Hungarian,[25] as well as Semitic languages such as Aramaic[26] and Hebrew.[27] In narrative styles of various Arabic dialects, it was studied by Palva,[28] Henkin,[29] and Sowayan.[30] In NA three distinct variants have been isolated, distinct by person.[31] I consider here only the 3rd type, with a fossilized P2msc.sg. dative pronoun, as these bring the text out of the past time narrative context to the here and now speaker-listener circle. This type occurred only in the NA-texts. In (9) a 57-year-old woman recalls how, as a young girl out with the sheep, a neighbor's son was playing with a catapult, and she almost lost an eye:

(9) biygūl(*b*Y) l-ak[eth.dative]: ʕayn-hiy ánfajaġat
he.says(*b*Y) to-you[eth.dative]: eye-her it.exploded
he said: "Her eye has exploded" [NA-F]

4.4 Motion verb compounds

A very dramatic combination of the ethical dative with motion verb compounds is typical of NA legend style. It starts with a motion verb, typically *jā* 'come' in the non-past (*b*)Y form, followed by a dative pronoun 'to you', fossilized in the msc.sg. form, and a motion verb participle, e.g. 'and he comes to you running' i.e. 'he came up running.'[32] In (10) 63-year-old ʕĀyših recalls how, at a very young age, some family members came to her while she was out with the sheep, and kidnapped her to be married:

[25] Rákosi 2008.
[26] Fassberg 2018.
[27] Halevy 2007.
[28] Palva 1991, 63.
[29] Henkin 2002, 293; 2010.
[30] Sowayan 1992, 51 ff. as 'dative of courtesy' and 'pseudo-dative'.
[31] Henkin 2010, 121 ff.
[32] Henkin 2000, 68; 2002, 294; 2010, 152 ff.

(10) w-iyjū(Y) -k[eth.dative] l-iyya [...]
and-they.come(Y) -to.you[m.sg][eth.dative] to-me [...]
and they came up to me

w-tjī(Y) -k[eth.dative] ʕĀyših maʕ-hum.
and-comes(Y)[fm] -to.you[m.sg][eth.dative] ʕAyšihwith-them
and ʕĀyših went off with them. [NA-F]

All three occur in our corpus of NA personal stories (although in much lower frequencies than in the traditional legend style), but not in the KKA corpus:

	NA	KKA
narrative imperative	3	0
ethical dative P2msc.sg	5	0
motion Verb + ethical dative	5	0

Table 4: Additional foregrounders: Nabaṭi bundle

In addition to these foregrounding elements shared by our two PA dialects, the NA personal stories were richer in other discourse elements typical of the colloquial artistic Arabic narrative style – Direct Speech segments, saying verbs, and backstitching, which is a sequence of an independent event clause, followed by a 'when'-clause which repeats the verb of the first clause, e.g. 'he drove off. When he drove off…':

	NA	KKA
direct speech	43	29
saying verbs	41	19
backstitching	17	1

Table 5: Additional elements of NA narrative style

Table 5 shows more direct speech in the NA corpus (of equal length to the KK corpus); more importantly, we see that in the NA texts 41 of the 43 direct speech segments are introduced by the verb 'say' whereas about a third of the KKA direct speech

segments are not preceded by a saying verb. These dense sequences of 'he said'-'I said' in in NA personal narrative, particularly in the men's stories, has been labeled 'ping pong' style,[33] since the rate of these exchanges resembles an energetic table tennis match.

(11) shows a typical ping pong dialog: the oldest NA narrator, over 90 years old, recalls how, in the period of austerity in the 1950s, people had to go to the local shop where their name was kept and the shopkeeper could supply them just their ration. When he came one day, however, his name was not found.

(11) begins with a backstitching segment 'I came… When I came…' and flows into a ping pong dialog between the client and the shopkeeper:

(11) jīt[F] al-Badáwiy.
I.came[F] (to) al-Badáwiy.
I came to al-Badáwiy.

yōmin jīt[bcks.F] gāḷ l-ay:
When I.came[bcks.F] he.said to-me
When I came, he said to me:

waḷḷāhiy mā ʕind-ī isʲm l-ak.
By.God NEG. with-me name of-yours
"By God, I don't have your name".

gult[F]: ya badáwiy.
I.said[F] O Badáwiy
I said: "Badáwiy"

gāḷ[F]: āʰ.
He.said[F] "Yes".

gult[F] l-ih: int hæmil [...]
I.said[F] to-him You negligent [...]
I said to him: "You are negligent"

[33] Henkin 1996, 183; 2000, 69; 2010, 115 ff.

gāl[F] l-ayya: […]
He.said[F] to-me […]
He said to me: ["…"]

gult[F]: waḷḷah l-aʕṭī-k taʕaḍḍab
I.said[F] By.God I'll.give-you you.suffer
I said: "By God, I'll teach you a lesson" [NA-M]

The KKA direct speech segments, in contrast, are more often presented with no saying verb. In (11) Naġam recalls how, when on vacation with her husband in Eilat, she suddenly went into labor, just as her family were joining them. Their anxious question is introduced by a mere subordinate particle (SUB) and appropriate intonation, rather than an explicit saying verb:

(12) maʕ žayyit ʔahl-i ʔinnu: mā l-ik, ya Naġam?
with coming family-my SUB what to-you, O Naġam?
as my family came, so: "What's up with you, Naġam? " [KKA-F]

The elements of global structure that characterize the KKA personal story style are more evaluations and explicit temporal markers than those of the NA texts. The KKA style is richer in evaluations for mediating the story by distancing from the setting or inner frame, switching to the outer or story-external frame; the Orientation is marked as past by means of the past marker *kān* (see Table 1):

	NA	KKA
evaluations	36	97
marked past *kān*	17	47

Table 6: Characteristics of KKA narrative style

This preference for explicating elements in the KKA style is probably due to the fact that personal stories are not familiar to the listeners, so need more explicating, by means of exact temporal setting and evaluative explanations. This is of course also true of personal stories in NA, but these are influenced by the

traditional narrative style of traditional stories that, being known to all the listeners, need much less explication.

5. Summary

A count of the temporal forms and other stylistic elements in the two corpora showed clearly that the NA personal narrative texts were closer to the NA legend style in all the layers: background, plotline, and foreground. Both background forms (initial and medial) and iterative plotline forms were typically in the concretizing non-past forms, namely (*b*)Y verbs and nominal predications. Foregrounders were typically those of the 'Nabaṭi bundle', namely narrative imperative, motion verb compounds and ethic dative, all absent from the KK texts, as well as the crosslinguistic concretizing foregrounders, namely Narrative Present (both simple and syndetic) and Presentatives, common to both styles but more frequent in the NA style. So, although Artistic Colloquial Arabic is primarily associated with the P3-stories of NA legend style, it also effects P1 narrative style in NA. In sum, NA is more concrete, richer in here and now forms, both for background and foreground.

KKA personal stories were richer in evaluative segments and more explicit past time markers, both contributing to making the text more explicit and coherent. This is especially important in personal narratives, which usually constitute new information for the listeners and thus need explicit information, whereas the NA narrative style originates in well-known traditional legends that need no explication – their traditional style flows on to personal P1-stories without, however, adding the explicating means characteristic of personal stories.

The main shortcomings of this study are the very small corpus and, more importantly, the wide age gap between the two groups of informants (see Corpus and method section). To just get an idea of what we may find in a corpus of an older age group of KKA speakers, I found (by chance) one text recorded from an illiterate building contractor, a Christian KKA speaker born in 1936.[34] His

[34] Zu'bi 2022, 691 ff.

1,620-word text combined a personal narrative of events from the distant past and a historical account of the warm inter-religious contacts characterizing KK. All but two of his 36 non-past background clauses were continuations of an initial past marker 'was.' This is in keeping with the style of the younger KKA speakers of our corpus, who tend to mark their backgrounds with an explicit past time marker, at least an initial marker, in contrast with the NA speakers who prefer pure non-past backgrounds. This corroborates our findings that the sedentary KKA dialect, though phonologically influenced by Bedouin dialects, has a pure sedentary temporal system in its personal narrative genres, with past tense backgrounds, whereas NA personal narratives are influenced by the Nabaṭi style of men's legends in the Bedouin cultural space, so is much more concrete, here and now.

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Substrat araméen dans la nomenclature des outils agricoles à Sar'īn et-taḥta (Liban)

ELIE KALLAS

This article aims to investigate what has survived from the Aramaic language in my native Lebanese tongue, specifically in the variety of Sar'īn et-Taḥta, which is almost forty km away, as the crow flies, from the Syrian Ma'lūla, Baḫ'a and Jubb-'Addīn, where western neo-Aramaic is still spoken. Between 2011 and 2015, I interviewed almost fifty villagers and recorded their speech. For the purposes of this paper, I have selected only the interviews of the fourteen informants who, at the time, were eighty years old or older and had only used traditional agricultural tools. I have also provided illustrations for all thirty-one tools mentioned in their argots, and investigated many dictionaries and ethnolinguistic sources to evaluate their "possible" Aramaic etymologies.

Keywords: Aramaic survived – Lebanese agriculture idiom

1. Introduction[1]

Que reste-t-il du phénicien et de l'araméen au Liban à part ses toponymes ? A la 9ème rencontre italienne de linguistique Afro-Asiatique (Trieste 1998), R. Contini et moi avons proposé de mettre sur pied un projet d'enquête systématique sur les

[1] Abréviations : néo-arabe (n.ar.), Sar'īn la basse (SB), Sar'īn la haute (SH), Musulmans chiites (MCh), Chrétiens maronites (CM), Grecs catholiques (GC), arabe (arl.), néo-arabe (n.ar.), araméen (aram.), hébreux (héb.), cananéen (can.), √ = racine. La transcription des *hamza* initiales ['] indique qu'elles dérivent étymologiquement d'une [q].

survivances araméennes en néo-arabe libanais, entreprise de très longue haleine et qui impose un travail d'équipe.[2] Un an plus tard, Riccardo a quitté l'Università Ca'Foscari de Venise pour l'Orientale de Naples et moi aussi, mais pour celle de Trieste. Ce projet est resté un souhait. En occasion de sa retraite annoncée, j'ai choisi de lui proposer un échantillon d'isoglosses, choisissant le lexique agricole survécu dans le parler de mon village natal Sar'īn la basse (SB), précisément ses outils.

2. Panorama historique

Les vestiges phéniciens, grecs, romains, byzantins et arabes témoignent de l'importance logistique et agricole de la vallée de la Beqā'. A mi-chemin entre 'Anjar et Héliopolis-Ba'albek (28 / 23 km.) se trouve Sar'īn la basse (SB). Durant l'époque ottomane, les émirs Ḥarfūš[3] contrôlaient le district de Ba'albek auquel appartenait Sar'īn et contestèrent l'extension territoriale de l'émirat druze du Šūf et notamment leur émir Faḫr ed-Dīn.[4]

Les vestiges romains et byzantins sont nombreux à SH[5] qui représentait une fois un bastion de première ligne pour défendre les princes de Ba'albek. A SB, on n'en a attesté même une seule jusqu'à maintenant. La raison est, peut-être, le fait qu'elle ne représentait qu'un espace à cultiver et duquel se nourrir.

[2] Voir Contini 1999, 103 et Kallas 1999, 137.

[3] Le clan Ḥarfūš est descendant de la sud-arabique tribu des Ḫuzā'a qui ont contribué à l'enquête arabe de la Syrie.

[4] D'après aṣ-Ṣafadī 1969, 147, l'émir Faḫr ed-Dīn « brûla » Sar'īn en 1622, habitée par Yūnis Ibn al-Ḥarfūš et ses proches.

[5] C'est à l'été 1934 que remontent les expéditions paléographiques des Pères jésuites dans la région du Grand Hermon et de la vallée haute de la Beqā' entre Liban et Anti-Liban. C'est précisément à SH que Père Mouterde 1951-9952, 63-69 relate les vestiges et les inscriptions grecques et monophysites, ensuite plus en haut encore, à Nabī Šīt, (*Ibid.*, 69-89) les ruines, les carrières et les postes d'observations romaines. Voir aussi Mouterde – Beaulieu 1955.

2.2 Esquisse géo-démographique

Sar'īn[6] (fr. Serhine / Sariine) est située dans la plaine septentrionale de la Beqā', à l'est de Ba'albek, aux pieds des montagnes de l'Anti-Liban, la plus orientale des deux chaînes qui composent le relief montagneux du Liban. Elle se trouve à une distance de 2 km de l'autostrade Ba'albek – Zaḥlé, à 67 km de Beyrouth, à 20-30 km, en ligne directe de la région du Qalamūn syrien, à 45 km environ de Ma'lūla, et à 950-1025 mètres d'altitude. Elle appartient au gouvernorat de Ba'albek-Hermel (dont le chef-lieu est Ba'albek) et au plus large gouvernorat de la Beqā' (dont le Chef-lieu administratif est Zaḥlé), desquels elle est presque équidistante (23 / 25 km).

Sar'īn la haute (SH) est en pente, son expansion démographique a envahi Sar'īn la basse (SB) qui a désormais presque la moitié de ses habitants chiites. Un pacte implicite veut que les deux Sar'īns aient toujours deux maires et deux conseils municipaux distincts : chrétien (SB) et chiite (SH). Raison pour laquelle, les Chiites de SB votent et paient les taxes municipales à SH.[7]

D'après les recensements de 1932, 1961 et 1983, cités par la sociologue Amāl Chamoun[8] la population des deux Sar'īns était composée de Musulmans chiites (MCh) et de Chrétiens : maronites (CM) et Grecs catholiques (GC) (Melkites):[9]

[6] D'après Freyha 1985, 89 l'origine araméenne de ce nom pourrait être *zār'īn* « paysans, laboureurs » ou *sar'īn* « sol crevassé, rayé », mais il ajoute qu'il ne faut pas ignorer *sir+'ēn* « le prince+des sources » la source meilleure. Cette dernière hypothèse pourrait être confirmée consultant chez Wardini 2007, 462, 305 les lexèmes araméens, hébreux et ougaritiques *sār* « prince, chef » + *'ayn* > *īn* « source ».

[7] D'après un rapport privé que le maire de SB ('Aql Naṣīf Šam'ūn) m'a livré en 2013, les originaires de SB étaient environ 4.000, les électeurs 1.303, dont 1.080 sont CM, GC 219 et 4 MCh.

[8] V. Chamoun 1984, 66-69.

[9] Après une dispute sévère avec l'Evêque maronites de Ba'albek (en 1930) mon grand-père (Yūsif Brāhīm Kallas) a convaincu plusieurs familles maronites de passer au rite melkite GC.

	Chiites	Chrétiens	CM	GC
1932 SH	404	127	121	6
1932 SB	0	464	387	77
1961 SH	1055	383	?	?
1961 SB	0	1254	1084	170
1983 SH	4100	48	42	6
1983 SB	120[10]	374	?	?

L'aspect confessionnel joue, malheureusement, un rôle crucial sur le plan de développement des deux contrées ; sitôt après le déclic de la guerre « anti-civile » libanaise (1975), les chrétiens, n'osant plus cultiver leurs champs, les ont vendus ou cédés aux chiites. Leurs fils ont abandonné leur village pour une vie sûre et moins dure.

D'après Amāl Chamoun,[11] avant l'arrivée à SH des Šam'ūn (début 18ème siècle), les familles originaires de Sar'īn étaient les chrétiennes Ma'lūf, Āl-Hnūd, Ṭaḥṭūḥ, Rāšid, et les chiites Ḥarb, Abū 'Ar'a, Šūmền, 'Abd Alla, L-Ḥajj-e-Ḥsayn et Āl-Ḥarfūš.

Or, si dès le début du 18ème siècle toutes les familles chrétiennes de SB sont originaires du Mont-Liban,[12] il est bien légitime de supposer que l'idiome de ses habitants ait conservé des traits caractéristiques de l'aram. du Mont Liban. S'il est, en outre, vrai que ses Šam'ūn, environ deux-tiers de ses habitants, sont originaires de Ḥaṣrūn, où l'araméen persista jusqu'à la moitié du

[10] D'après Chamoun 1984, 68 les chrétiens qui ont définitivement quitté SB, pour des raisons de sécurité et de travail sont au nombre de 524, en 1983. Les chiites émigrés à SB ont confisqué ou acheté logements et terrains des Chrétiens de SB, conservant leur résidence à SH (*Id.*). Ils ne participent pas aux élections municipales de SB et ne paient leurs taxes qu'à SH.

[11] V. Chamoun 1984, 23-32.

[12] D'après Amāl (Chamoun 1984), qui a dessiné leurs arbres généalogiques : les Šam'ūn sont originaires de Ḥaṣrūn, puis Tannūrīn (*Ibid.*, 23, 32), les Kellās (de Šaḥtūl-Keserwān) (33, 34), Raḥmi (de Bšarri) (33, 35), 'Ar'af / Jmayyil (de 'Ar'af / le-Mtayn) (33, 36), Abū Īliyya (B'abdāt) (37, 38), Lebbus (Bikfayya) (37, 39), Karam (Zġarta, puis Baskinta) (37, 40), Abū Mūsa (Bayt Šabāb) (37, 41), Ṣada'a (Tannūrīn) (42, 43), le-Mtayni (le-Mtayn) (42, 44), Ḥarb (Ḥawš Barada, puis Baskinta) (42, 45), Š-Šedyā (ʿAš'ūt) (42, 46). J'ajouterai aussi les Mhanna (Baskinta).

17ème siècle,[13] j'ai bonne raison d'espérer que cette enquête fournisse une moisson abondante et utile aux araméistes.

3. Habitat et produits agricoles

Après la conquête ottomane en 1537, le prince Faḫr ed-dīn II (el-Ma'nī l-Kabīr) (1572-1635), fit de la production de soie la principale richesse de son royaume.[14] Ainsi le mûrier participa à la naissance de SB qui s'appelait autrefois *le-Bsētīn* (les champs). A partir de 1914, l'histoire des soies libanaises est faite de mouvements saccadés de chutes brutales suivies qui finit par tendre vers zéro. Mes interlocuteurs octogénaires (sauf info[1]) n'ont cultivé que les principaux produits agricoles : vigne, figuier, olivier, pommes, blé, orge, pommes de terre, tomates, maïs, pois chiches, fèves, lentilles, flageolets, etc. Ces récoltes remplacèrent les mûriers.[15]

Les paysans chrétiens de SH, qui habitaient des maisons construites en pierres de taille extraites des carrières voisines, ont commencé à construire dans leurs champs des « huttes de gardien surélevées sur des piliers »[16] appelées *'erzāl*, pour protéger, irriguer et soigner leurs plantations *mazrū'iyyi*. Ces huttes furent progressivement remplacées par des petits logements stables en briques crues (un mélange de terre, d'eau et de paille finement hachée), séchées à l'air et au soleil. Le plan d'une maison se développait à partir d'une pièce jusqu'à atteindre cinq foyers selon le budget de chaque famille et le nombre de ses membres.[17] Les plus riches en ajoutaient un plan supérieur (*'elliyyi*) où ils passaient les soirées au clair de la lune. Les maisons traditionnelles de SB,

[13] V. Contini 1999, 101-102.

[14] V. Ollivry 2011 et Ṣafadī Aṣ- 1969.

[15] Ils sont si rares, que pour m'indiquer l'ancienne cascade du ruisseau qui faisait tourner le moulin du village, mon Info4 m'a dit : *hēda š-šāġōᵘr elli m'ābāl et-tūteᵛ taba' bayt eŠ-Šedyāᵓ* (la cascade du ruisseau, celle juste en face du mûrier des Chadyak).

[16] Deux photos d'un *Wachthütte auf Stangen* à Bēsān et 'Ēn Kārim sont illustrées par Dalman (DPII n.13 et 16). V. aussi Dozy 1960, 348.

[17] Voir Reich 1937, 56-57 sur la construction des maisons dans l'Anti-Liban et la fabrication de leurs briques.

jusqu'en 1950, étaient rectangulaires à toit plat fait en poutre et solives couvertes de fougère ou *bellān* « poterium » et terre battue. Un rouleau cylindrique en pierre calcaire '*maḥdali*' (v. ci-dessous) servait à presser et entretenir leurs couvertures, qui reposent sur des piliers en bois ou des arcs intérieurs. Aujourd'hui, la seule maison traditionnelle survécu à SB est en ruine.

4. Enquête linguistique

4.1 Mes informateurs

Tout a débuté entre 2011 et 2015 avec l'objectif de comparer le dialecte des chrétiens de SB[18] avec celui des chiites de SH.[19] J'avais dressé la liste de signes linguistiques distinctifs (*hallmarks*) et celle des personnes qui n'ont jamais quitté Sar'īn ; soucieux de les classer d'après des critères générationnels (70-90), (50-70) (30-50) (30-10). Chez les chrétiens de SB, j'étais accueilli à bras ouverts. Chez les chiites de SH, la méfiance était à son apogée envers tous ceux qui n'appartenaient pas à leur communauté religieuse, raison pour laquelle je n'ai pu enregistrer, qu'en cachette, leurs discours libres au marché.

Des 51 discours registrés à SB je n'ai retenu utiles pour cette recherche que 12, voire ceux des paysans octogénaires[20] qui n'ont pratiqué que les techniques agricoles traditionnelles. Le questionnaire soumis était ouvert et abordait deux thèmes

[18] Le dialecte des chrétiens de SB ressemble à celui de leurs coreligionnaires de Zaḥlé, décrit par Henri Fleisch (1959) 1974, 53- 95.

[19] Le dialecte des chiites de SH ressemble à celui de leurs coreligionnaires de Qṣarnaba, décrit par Grotsfeld 1973-1974.

[20] Par ordre d'ancienneté : Yūsif Karam[1] et sa femme Maryam,[2] Elias Ḥanna Rašīd Šam'ūn,[3] Fahd Ḥanna Rašīd Šam'ūn[4] et sa femme Fawz,[5] Emile Šam'ūn[6] et sa femme Nazha,[7] Elias Ṣada'a[8] et sa femme Nuhād,[9] Joseph Elias Abu Mūsa,[10] Wardi[11] veuve Ḥanna Šam'ūn, Layla[12] veuve Yūsif Šam'ūn. A l'heure actuelle tous ces bons agriculteurs sont décédés. Les informations que 'Ebbās Šam'ūn[13] et sa femme Ṣabāḥ[14] m'ont fourni ont comblé plusieurs lacunes de mon enquête. Quand je citerai leurs discours, le cas échéant, c'est ce même ordre numérique que j'ajouterai à (Info) ; ainsi Info[1] correspond à Yūsif Karam et Info[13] à son beau-fils 'Ebbās, etc.

principaux : leur vie quotidienne et celle d'autrefois. De leurs affables discours, je n'ai choisi, pour respecter l'objectif de cette recherche et l'espace éditorial à disposition, que les lexèmes qui concernent les outils agricoles.

4.2 Aramaïsmes possibles

Ce sous-titre, inspiré à une réflexion de Hopkins[21] a guidé mes pas depuis longtemps. Raison pour laquelle, je propose, ici-bas, simplement le fruit de mes recherches sans rien prétendre.

Cependant, l'assignation d'un mot n.ar. levantin au substrat araméen peut rarement se fonder sur des critères phonologiques, et repose plus souvent sur l'indice de sa distribution géographique au sein du néo-arabe ainsi que sur des considérations d'ordre historico-culturel : les aramaïsmes *possibles* sont donc plus nombreux des aramaïsmes *certains*.

Il ne faut s'étonner si Feghali, Freyḥa et Ḥubayqa appellent « syriaque » le [néo]-araméen parlé à l'époque. De nos jours presque tous les néo-arabophones prétendent de parler arabe.

4.2.1 Sources abrégées

Abu-Ḥaidar 1979, *Baskinta* (AḤB) ; Barthélemy 1935-1969, *Dictionnaire* (BD) ; Barġūṯī 2001, al-*Lahjah al-filisṭīniyyah* (BF) ; Bustāni 1977, *Muḥīṭ* (BM) ; Bergsträsser 1921, *Ma'lūla* (BMa') ; Brockelmann 1928, *Lexicon* (BL) ; Costaz 1963, Dictionnaire (CD) ; Dalman 1935, *Palästina* (DP) ; Dalman 2013, *Palästina* (DP $^{III, IV, V}$) ; Denizeau 1960, *Dictionnaire* (DD) ; Dozy 1991, *Suplément* (DS) ; Feghali 1918, *Emprunt* (FE) ; Féghali 1927, *Wâdi-Chahrour* (FWC) ; Frayha 1973, *Mu'jam* (FM) ; Ḥubayqa 1939, *Dawā'ir* (ḤD) ; Grotsfeld 1973-1974, *Qṣarnaba* (GQ) ; Nakhla 1973, *Ġarā'ib* (NĠ) ; Reich 1937, *Anti-Liban* (RAL) ; Touma 1958, *Hadeth el-Jobbé* (TḤJ) ; Werner – Behnstedt 1993, *Qalamūn* (WBQ).

[21] Hopkins 1995, 41, cité par Contini 1999, 112-113.

4.3 Nomenclature des outils agricoles récupérée à Sar'īn et-Taḥta

BDR *baydar* pl. *byēdir* « aire où l'on dépique le blé en passant le traîneau (v. *mawraj / nawraj*) ». « Terrain découvert choisi pour l'aire au blé et exposé au vent d'ouest » c' est précisément le sens que (BD, 72) donne à une version moins fiable de l'arl. *baydaru-*. Pour la Palestine *bēdar* est largement illustré par DP, 243, 254 ; DP^{III}, 68-69, 108, 149, 151 (v. les photos qu'il fournit : 348-351 n. 12, 13, 14) et BF, 209.

JRF *majrafi* « houe » s'alterne avec *jārūf* chez mes informateurs (Info^{8,10,11,13}). Même sens de *muğurfīta* à Ma'lūla. Sous forme de *majrafi,* ce mot peut être le nom d'instr. du v. ar. *ğarafa* et sous forme *jārūf* le syr. *gorūfo* (NG, 69). J'y ajoute aussi l'hébr. *garfa* qui est une sorte de houe pour remuer le sol. Pour la Palestine *meğrafe* est citée dans DP^{IV}, 175, 274 ; DP^{II}, 120, 126, 235 et BF, 267.

JRŠ *majraši / jēro^{w}š* « Deux pierres rondes dont la pierre supérieure est à deux trous. Le trou central sert à y mettre les graines à écraser (blé, lentilles, pois chiche etc.), l'autre sert pour y mettre un petit bâton en bois et rouler la pierre dùne façon cylindrique pour écraser et broyer les graines ».[22]

ḤDL *maḥdali* « un rouleau cylindrique en pierre calcaire, long dùn mètre et ayant à ses extrémités deux trous par lesquels le saisit un arc de bois ou de fer, qui servait à cylindrer la terre et la terrasse dùne maison traditionnelle ». C' est la même description qu' en donne (TḤJ, 17) à Hadeth el-Jobbé (Liban-Nord) et Reich dans l'Anti-Liban[23] et BD, 148 qui l'attribue à √ḥdl en Syr. Moy. et au (Liban-Nord). Or, ce lexème est clairement arabe, précise Contini,[24] quoiqu'il soit présent dans le n.ar. du Mont-Liban, en Syrie et en Palestine en tant que *maḥdalé*. D'autres équivalents araméens plus fiables sont *mu'°k̲lūt̲a* enregistrés à Ma'lūla par Reich[25] et *ma'arğīlāne* enregistrés en Syrie du nord par Enno Littmann,[26] où Contini « reconnait aisément une formation nominale dérivée du participe *par'el* du verbe *'argel* attesté en judéo-palestinien et en syriaque avec la valeur de « rouler une pierre ».[27]

[22] Skaf 2014, 2, photo 17.
[23] Reich 1937, 57, 69, n.2.
[24] Contini 1999, 115.
[25] Reich 1937, 50 fig.5 et 57.
[26] Biesterfeldt 1986, 44.
[27] Contini 1999, 115.

DRY *medrèyi* « fourche à quatre, cinq, même sept dents en bois pour remuer les foins, le blé écrasés par le *mawraj,* la herse ». BD, 238 la décrit comme une « fourche à quatre dents avec laquelle on jette le blé en l'air pour le monder » et l'attribue à l'arl. *miḏrātu-* et *miḏrā-*. FE , 59 appelle cette fourche *'atrîne* et l'oppose à *mòdre* qui dérive de l'ar. cl. *miḏra*^{n} « fourche à cinq dents… ».

RFŠ *rafš* « pelle ». BD, 287 renvoie à l'ar. de la Syr. moy. NĠ, 75 à l'aram. *rafšo.* ḤD, 318 l'attribue au v. syr. √rkš d'où le n. d'instr. *markūš* (pelle). Or du syr. √rkš, BL, 732 nous donne « collegit » et CD, 347 « lier, *to bind* ».

SKK *sekki* « soc en fer de la charrue ». Dans nos entretiens j'ai noté que mes informateurs le référaient aussi à toute la charrue ». Il s'agit certainement dùne synecdoque expansive. BD, 401 renvoie à l'arl. De même toutes les sources que j'ai consultées. J'oserais supposer un rapport sémantique entre *sekki* et le v. *šakk*^{a} lui aussi arl. « ficher une lance, piquer ». *Sikke* est fort bien décrit dans DP^{II}, 69-73 et les photos qu'il fournit (ivi, 393-395 n. 19, 21 et 22) correspondent exactement au *sekki* utilisé autrefois à SB.

SRQ *sèrū'a* « scie à manche unique et lame courte et épaisse ». Du même avis BM, 408 qui l'attribue au jargon des menuisiers. Quand j'ai demandé à mes informateurs la différence entre le mot *menšār* et *sèrū'a,* mes info^{1}et^{4} ont précisé que le *sèrū'a* est plus court et épais et qu'il s'agit dùne scie à manche unique, tandis que le *menšār* pourrait 'aussi' en avoir deux. (v. ci-bas § 5. Conclusions)

ŠBṬ *šabbūṭa / šebbāṭa / mešbāṭ* « un balai, fait de petites branches sèches avec un long manche utilisé à la fois pour balayer les champs et comme batteur de tapis ». BD, 375-356 l'associe au Lib. et au syr. NĠ, 80 et NĠ, 79 à l'arm. *šabṭo* (bâton) < II *šabbaṭ* « frapper plusieurs fois », I *šbaṭ* « fouetter ».

ŠBQ *šèbo^{w}'* « un long bâton qui sert à chasser les animaux ». D'après NĠ, 80 de l'aram. *šōboûqto* < du I *šbaq* « lancer ». V. aussi le syr. *šabūqto* « baguette, bâton » CD, 358. BM, 449 l'attribue au vernaculaire, tout court.

ŠQF *šè'o^{w}f* « gros marteau, à manche court, de tailleur de pierre ». BD, 399 ; FE, 31 et FM, 97 renvoient tous au syr. I *šᵊqaφ*. Pour la Palestine, BF, 689 cite *šā'ūf.*

ŠQL *šè'o^{w}l* syn. de *meḫel* « barre de fer forgé pour soulever les roches ». Dans ce même sens il est cité par BD, 400 qui renvoie au syr. *šᵊqal* « porter ». NĠ, 82-83 aram. *šoqūlo* v. *id.* √šql « soulever » et *šqal.*

ŠLF *šelf* « une barre de fer pointue » mais aussi « un petit rameau ». BD, 404 évoque le 1er sens - celui de « lancer » et « fer de lance »

- le syr. *šelpā* « couteau ». NĠ, 83 aram. *šelfo* « fer de lance ». Dans le sens de petit rameau FM, 98 cite BM, 479 qui, quant à lui, en donne les deux sens en l'attribuant au vernaculaire. Or, mes info[1,6,9, 13] ont utilisé la II *šallaf* dans le sens *šaḥḥal* « élaguer les arbres, les vignes et les oliveraies ».

ṢMD *ṣűmd / sőnd* (*ṣømd*) « Charrue ». FE, 52 le rapporte parmi les aramaïsmes du lexique agricole de Kfar ʿAbīda. Ce terme est répandu non seulement dans le Liban du Nord mais aussi dans la vallée de la Beqāʿ et au Qalamūn (dans les formes *ṣimd*, *ṣumd*, *ṣind* et *ṣund*) et dans toute la Syrie occidentale au nord de Damas.[28] D'après Contini « Le signifié originaire du substantif était apparemment « joug » et le mot est probablement d'origine cananéenne en araméen ».[29]

ʿDR *maʿdo^{w}r* « un piochon ». De l'aram. *mʿadro* d'après NĠ, 89. Du même avis FM, 172 citant ḤD, 380 qui renvoie à l'hébr. *maʿder* « mot d'origine cananéenne » selon FWC, 73. On trouve son équivalent arl. *miʿwal* chez BM, 645 qui le donne comme synonyme de *maʿdūr* chez certains libanais. Or, une serfouette a une large lame horizontale, généralement avec un pic pointu à l'autre extrémité de la tête, alors qu'une pioche a un pic pointu à une extrémité de la tête et une lame étroite à l'autre v. aussi *mankūš* et *maʿwil*. Aujourd'hui, les termes pioches et binettes peuvent être utilisés pour signifier la même chose, mais ce sont en fait des outils différents. De tous mes informateurs seuls (Info[1,4,10]) l'ont appelé *maʿdūr* ; les autres ont préféré *maʿwil*.

ʿFR *ʿeffāra* « piochon à deux dents avec un côté pointu et l'autre muni de deux dents qui sert surtout pour ramasser dans les champs les épis et les pommes de terre qui ont échappé aux moissonneurs ». D'après BD, 537 qui ne cite pas le n. d'instr. « c'est propr. ramasser le blé dans la poussière » ; il renvoie à l'arl. *ʿaffara* « rouler ou enfouir dans la poussière », mais aussi au syr. *ʿappar* « glaner ». D'après NĠ, 90 ce v. dérive de l'aram. *ʿoûforto* < *ʿafar* « ramasser dans les vignes les grappes de raisin qui ont échappé aux moissonneurs » et « accumuler le blé dans le *baydar* pour le dépiquer ». AḤB, 178 « Ramasser dans les champs les épis qui ont échappé aux moissonneurs ».'

ĠRBL *ġerbāl* « crible ». BD, 572 renvoie à l'arl. *ġirbālu-* et au v. *ġarbal*. Pour la Palestine *ġurbāl* est illustré par DP, 274 qui nous documente, en outre une variante sémantique *kirbāl* (DP[III], 360-

[28] Arnold – Behnstedt 1993, 85.

[29] Contini 1999, 112-113.

362 v. les photos qu'il fournit n. 31, 32). La même quùne dame de *Qubayyāt* m'avait fourni distinguant entre *ġerbāl*, *kirbāl* et *munḥul,* la différence, me dit-elle, réside dans la largeur de leurs trous.

FRṬ *Fārūṭa* « canne munie dùn crochet métallique à son extrémité qu'on utilise pour faire tomber les cônes de pin au sol ». FE, 57, 67 évoque le syr. *pʿraṭ* lui ajoute le lib. *farfūṭa* < aram. *parpūṭā* « une miette ». D'après NĠ, 92 ça dérive de l'aram. *forūṭo.* v. *faraṭ* SB « émietter ». BD, 603 égrener (une grenade). D'où *farfūṭa* pl. *frāfīṭ* « miette ; petit morceau, parcelle de nourriture » syr. *parpūṭā* « miette ». NĠ, 91 reprend le même sens que (BD) et l'attribue à l'aram. *fraṭ* « couper séparer ». BM, 685 reprend le v. ar. *faraṭa-* mais il lui attribue le n. d'instr. 'dialectale' *fārṭa* ; ḤD, 355-356 affirme la même étymologie syr. que FE, 57, 66. FM, 128 les reprend en ce qui concerne le v. *faraṭ* et *farfūṭa*, mais il ajoute que le *fārūṭ* sert aussi pour grimper aux arbres.

FR' *ferrā'a* « hache, cognée ». BD, 602 suppose qu'il dérive du v. tr. I *fara'* « couper les branches, élaguer, tailler (un mûrier) ou du syr. *para'* n. d'ag. II *farra'* au Liban. NĠ, 91 l'attribue au v. aram. *fra'* « dénuder ». FM, 128 cite *farrā'a*, renvoie au v. *farra'* et à FE, 45, 6) sans se prononcer sur son étymologie. Pour la Palestine *fārū'* et *fērū'a* DP, 2, 9. Ce mot est commun à l'aram. et au n.ar. ; il s'agit là, à mon avis, dùne simple superposition entre les deux sources.

QŠŠ *'āšoʷš* « instrument qui sert à ratisser les herbes et les brins de paille ». DD, 419 cite le sens fig. de *qāšūš* « valet qui prend toutes les autres cartes (au jeu) ». Quant à « balai » il cite *måqåšše* [SB *m'aššé*]. NĠ, 95 cite le v. *qašš,* aram. *qaš* « ramasser » et homonyme du subst. aram. *qaš* « brins de paille, chaume ». BD, 658 attribue *qašš* à la Syr. moy. Or si le subst. *qaš* (brins de paille) est aussi arabe, le n. d'instr. y est comme *miqaššah*, BM, 736.

QḤṬ *'eḥḥāṭ[a]* « large grattoir rectangulaire utilisé pour enlever les ordures déposées sur le terrain, ramasser le blé éparpillé et déblayer la boue et les déchets ». BD, 639 à la Syr. moy. FM, 137 renvoie au II v. lib. √qḥṭ et à l'hébr. √כחד vs. l'arl. *qaḥtu-* « sécheresse ». Dans l'Ecomusée de la voisine Terbol, il est illustré *mis-hayé*[30] mon guide l'a appelé *seḥḥèyi.* Chez DD, 240 on trouve *mesḥe* pl. *masêḥe* « sorte de pelle pour creuser les *masêkeb* ».

[30] Skaf 2014, photo 13.

QṬRB *ʾaṭrə̄ʷb* Info[13] « cheville qui se trouve au bout de la charrue et qui sert à relier et fixer celle-ci au joug auquel on attelle les bœufs ». Attesté par BM, 744 ; FE, 58 ; FM, 141 et NĠ, 96 qui l'attribue à l'aram. *qaṭrībo* ; en tant que *ʾaṭrīb* au Qalamūn ;[31] *ʾaṭrīb* à Baskinta (AḤB, 178), *qoṭrīb* au Liban du nord et *ḳitrīb* à ʿAğlūn et *ḳaṭrībe* ailleurs en Palestine (DP[II], 83 et ph. n.22 :1aa). Pour Contini « Son étymologie araméenne est garantie soit par le syr. *qaṭrībā*, soit par le judéo-pal. *qəṭarbā,* glosé par J. Levy 1868 : 357a ».[32]

MḪL *meḫel,* synonyme de *šə̂ʾoʷl* « levier pour soulever et arracher les grosses pierres ». D'après BD, 779 sa longueur totale est dùn m. 20 et dérive du syr. *muḫla* « barre de fer ; levier » cf. gr. μοχλός. BF, 1159 renvoie lui aussi au grec.

MRR *murr* « bêche » une sorte de *rafš* dont le fer est triangulaire et creux par devant et dont le manche est pourvu dùn bâtonnet transversal pour faciliter l'action du pied ». Dans ce même sens on la trouve chez BD, 783 comme *márr* pl. *mrā́r* avec son équivalent arl. *marru-* « houe ». V. aussi BM, 846. Or le syr. contient aussi *maro'* « houe » CD, 190.

MSS *mëssā̆s* « aiguillon du bouvier ». NĠ, 100 ; FE, 64 l'attribuent à l'aram. *masoso.* Dans le n. aram. occ., il est attesté *massōsa* par Bergstässer,[33] Arnold et Behnstedt.[34] Pour la Palestine, BF, 1170 attribue *mussās* à une origine syr.

MLŠ *mə̀loʷš* « courtilière, sorte de faucille ». Ce n. d'istr. provient, d'après BD, 798 du v. *malaš – yemloš,* v. tr. « plumer épiler », aram. *məláš* « plumer, arracher l'herbe ». NĠ, 101 lui aussi évoque l'aram. *mlaš.* DD, 503 cite la version de FWC, 224 « effeuillage » ver à soie. Mais il ajoute un autre n. d'instr. inspiré à DP, 28, 29 voire *mellâše,* cité aussi par deux informateurs de SB (Info[13,14]) comme « sorte de bâton dont une extrémité se fixe au manche de la faucille et l'autre au coude ou à l'épaule du moissonneur pour protéger son avant-bras du frottement de la paille ».

NJL *manjïl* « faucille utilisée autrefois pour récolter les céréales comme le blé ». D'après BD, 816 l'arl. *minjalu* dérive du syr. *mangelā* > *mangə̄la,* du v. I √ngl « couper ». Pour la Palestine, DP[III], 20-23 ajoute à *menğal* « Schneidesichel » *ḥālūš, ḥāšūše, ḳālūše, šuršāra* et *ḳaṭafe.* v. les photos illustrées (ivi, 341 : 1b et 2).

[31] Arnold – Behnstedt 1993, 86.
[32] Contini 1999, 113-114.
[33] Bergstässer1921, 59.
[34] Arnold – Behnstedt 1993, 88.

NḪL *menḫul* « tamis, bluttoir ». BD, 819 et toutes les sources que j'ai sondées renvoient à l'arl. *naḫala* « tamiser » *munḫul* v. *naḫal*. Pour la Palestine, *menḫul* v. *ġerbāl* illustré par DP^{III}, 141, 283-288.

NŠR *menšār* « Scie ». BD, 827 et toutes les sources que j'ai consultées renvoient à l'arl. *našara* « scier ».

NKŠ *manko^{w}š* « Une pioche est un outil simple qui comprend une tête en métal avec une pointe à une extrémité et souvent une lame à l'autre, montée sur un long manche en bois ». Il ne faut pas le confondre avec le piochon *ma'dūr* ». Il s'agit du n. d'instr. forgé du v. *nakaš* « piocher, bêcher le sol » (BD, 849) vs. *rakš* > aram. NĠ, 75 *nakaš* « piocher, bêcher le sol » / *mankūš* « pioche » de l'aram. *rakaš*. FM, 184 *nākūš* < v. *nakaš* variation phonétique de *rakaš*. Le syr. nous offre aussi *naqšo*. Pour la Palestine *mankūš* est cité plusieurs fois chez DP, 121, 132, 175 et de même le verbe *nakaš* (ivi, 313).

NWN *no^{w}n* « pièce de bois auquel on attache le soc de rasette en fer de la charrue ». NĠ, 103 justifie cette appellation par le fait que cette pièce ressemble à la forme finale de la lettre *nūn* en syr. voire [ـن].

NYR *ne^{y}r* « joug pour atteler les bœufs de labour ». BD, 858 renvoie à l'arl. *nīr*. FM, 186 propose le syr. *nīro* et citant al-Ǧawālīqī[35] il suppose que l'ar. l'ait emprunté au syr. depuis longtemps. Pour une description du *nīr* et ses accessoires en Palestine voir DP^{II}, 395 n.21b.

WRJ *mawraj* s'alterne avec *nauraj* à SB. « Instrument qui sert au dépiquage des céréales et des légumineuses. Son usage remonte à l'antiquité. Sur la face inferieure de cette planche, qui est en bois de chêne ou de noyer, on introduit des fragments de pierre basaltique, de silex des scies ou des clous qui forment une saillie d' environ 3cm. On attelle des bœufs à l' extrémité incurvée de l'instrument pour le tirer. Le paysan s'installe sur ce traineau qui glisse facilement sur la surface des gerbes. Le poids du tribulum sépare les grains de leur enveloppe et hache les pailles ».[36] Pour RAL, 63 « le traineau à dépiquer » est aram. *mōraǧ*. Du même avis FM, 176 qui en donne l'arl. *lawḥ ad-dirāsa*. BD, 806 cite ce mot comme *máwraj* « herse à dépiquer le grain », ajoutant une forme arl. *nawradju-* et hébr. *mōray*. Pour la Palestine, *nōraǧ* est bien illustré par DP^{III}, 352-356 Bilderanhang n. 16, 20, 21, 24.

[35] al-Ǧawālīqī 1942, 341.

[36] Skaf 2014, 2 n.12, photo 12.

5. Conclusions

Grâce à cette enquête qui m'a reporté à la terre de mes ancêtres, à Riccardo Contini qui depuis une trentaine d'années m'a poussé à s'y plonger, à Franco Crevatin et Fabrizio Pennacchietti qui ont inspiré mes pas, j'ai hésité, médité, 'pioché' dans des dizaines de dictionnaires, quêtant sans rien prétendre, les aramaïsmes possibles survécus à Sarʿīn et-Taḥta.

Grâce à tous mes informateurs, bons agriculteurs décédés, mémoire d'une vie communautaire enfuie, j'ai pu conserver un échantillon de leurs souvenirs à transmettre à leurs descendants et mieux apprendre les souffrances qu'ils ont endurées pour nous procurer à manger quand nous étions petits.

Enquêtant sur l'origine du terme *murr* (bêche), je me suis limité à citer mes sources traditionnelles, réservant à ces conclusions une réflexion révélatrice de Franco Crevatin :

Riconoscere all'origine de latino *marra* «tipo di zappa a lama larga» una voce vicino-orientale antica significa ammettere, vista la povertà tecnologica dell'artefatto, un antichissimo prestito legato all'espansione dell'agricoltura.[37]

Crevatin ajoute après le mot « antica » la note suivante (n.12) : «Sir., arab. *marr*(*ā*), accadico *marru*(*m*), egiziano *mr* (P. Tanis 14, 4 come significato dell'ideogramma[38] «zappa»), tutti dal sumerico *mar* con lo stesso senso.»

Certes, l'industrie agricole a balayé l'agriculture traditionnelle depuis les années 1960. De l'araire à la charrue, c'est l'esprit d'un pays qui n'est plus le même. Le sens d'une trentaine d'isoglosses illustrées dans cette enquête a évolué au gré des personnes, de leurs nouveaux contextes culturels et des situations qui les mobilisent.

Cependant, la nouvelle génération, à son insu, les utilise dans leurs expressions idiomatiques sans même connaître exactement de quoi s'agit-il. En août 2024, un jeune homme demanda à son

[37] Crevatin 2002, 20-21.

[38] 

frère mineur de l'aider ; ce dernier, concentré sur son téléphone portable, lui répond « ne vois-tu que je suis occupé ! » et lui, de répliquer furieusement : *šu 'am tenkuš be-l-ma'do^{w}r ?* (Quoi ! on dirait que tu es entrain de bêcher avec le piochon !). Une fois apaisé, je lui ai demandé s'il connaissait ce qu'est un *ma'do^{w}r* ? Il a inventé des vertes et des pas mûrs. Il est aussi vrai que le tracteur [*traktōr le-flēḥa*] a remplacé le soc en fer de la charrue *sekki* qui, de nos jours n'indique, que les rails de chemin de fer, où porteront-ils ces rails demain ?

Quand j'ai demandé à mes informateurs la raison pour laquelle ils appelaient la « scie courte et épaisse » *sèrū'a* alors qu'il ne renvoie qu'à l'ar. *sāriq* « voleur », mon (info[13]) célèbre pour son humour inné m'a répondu : *ya bni, li anna metel le-ḥkūmi btēkul 'a r-rāyiḥ we-j-jēyi* « mon fils, car elle est comme nos gouverneurs, elle vole [le bois] en avant et en arrière ». Tous ceux présents ont éclaté à rire, hochant la tête et approuvant ce qu'il disait. Fouillant dans le dictionnaire à la recherche de l'origine d'une parole, pourrait-on ignorer cette spontanéité intuitive qui en était à l'origine ? C'est le verbe « aboyer » qui dérive de [*baï*], variante de [*bau-*] et non vice-versa. De même en arl. et n.ar., c'est de [*'aw*] que dérive le v. *'āwâ* / lib. *'awwa*. Ce qui est étonnant c'est la perception populaire des sons qui nous restent énigmatiques ; les chiens du monde arabe émettent-ils des pharyngaux que les autres chiens n'émettent pas ?

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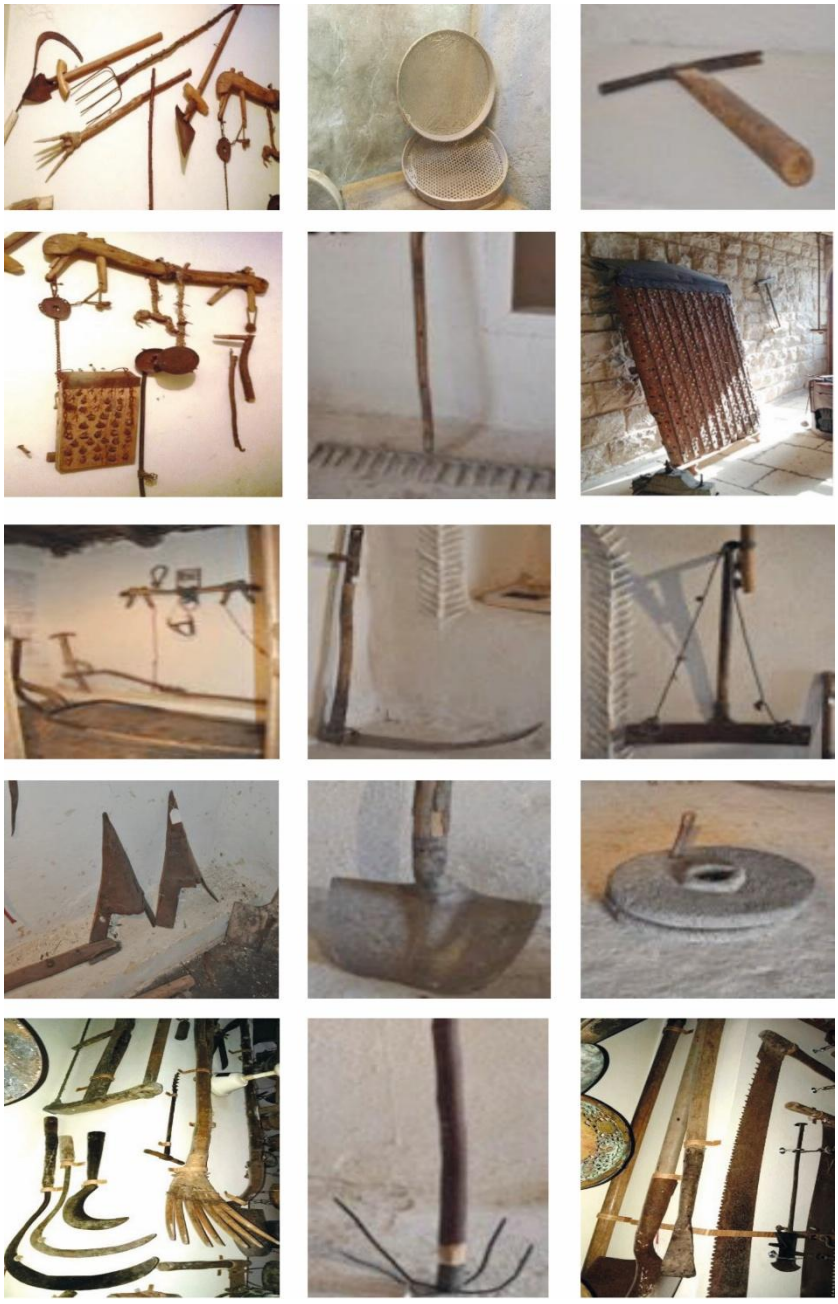
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Photos prises par l'A. à Sar'īn et-Taḥta chez Kamīl Nadra Šam'ūn, 2014

Traces of the Past: Vanishing Archaisms in the Omani Lexicon

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In the era of social media and easier communications with the outside world through mobile phones and the internet, local knowledge and lexicon related to traditional practices of non-standardised vernaculars tend to change fast and sometimes to disappear to be often replaced by other – more mainstream – forms. Oman and Omani Arabic are not an exception in this sense. Arabic dialectological studies often disregard lexis to focus on syntactic, morphological, and phonological investigations. However, indigenous names used for plants, clothing, household items, traditional medicine, parts of the body, and so on hold vital information about the history and traditions of a country and of a community.

This article is a preliminary study of the culture-specific lexicon found in the al-ʿAwābī district of northern Oman. It includes the analysis of archaisms, regional specifications and selected quadriconsonantal roots, but also a showcase of diachronic and areal differentiations in semantics. Regional lexical specifications are not new to the Arabic-speaking world since lexis is often linked to specific environmental and cultural factors. In Oman, however, a thorough study of lexicon is still needed, and this article is a first step in this direction.

Keywords: Omani Arabic – Arabic dialectology – Lexicography – Archaisms - al-ʿAwābī Arabic

1. Introduction

The idea of collecting and analysing the lexicon of the Omani vernacular spoken by the informants in the district of al-ʿAwābī was born from the urgent need of recording the terminology

related to the material culture in use by the Arabic-speaking population in the Arabian Peninsula. My interest lied specifically in the semantic fields of plants, clothing, household items, food, and traditional medicine.

I first approached lexical and dialectological studies during my BA and MA degrees thanks to my mentor, Professor Riccardo Contini, who inspired me towards the fascinating field of lexical documentation in the Arab world. My PhD work – whose data this article is based on – was born from those first attempts to study and analyse the Omani lexicon available in the existing literature, trying to find gaps and opportunities for development.

Lexis is often left aside from dialectological research in Arabic, which focuses mainly on the description of the dialects' grammar. Except for the impressive works by Behnstedt and Woidich (i.e., the *Wortatlas der Arabischen Dialekte, Vol. I, II, III*, 2011–2014), which mapped Arabic lexical items used in the Arab world, only a few others focussed on this topic. With regards to Omani Arabic, Reinhardt (1894), Jayakar (1889), Brockett (1985), and Davey (2016) partly dealt with lexicon. However, none of these works offer a thorough analysis of the lexical items they list: Davey (2016) only reports a few lists of lexicon divided by semantic categories, with no additional analysis; Brockett (1985) lists the agricultural lexicon found in the city of Khabura in al-Batinah region, offering a basic analysis of their origin and use; Jayakar (1889) gives a list of lexical items with little discussion; and, finally, Reinhardt (1894) provides a good amount of lexicon, unfortunately without clear systematisation or analysis.

This article presents an analysis of regional semantic specifications and selected quadriconsonantal roots used by the informants in the al-ʿAwābī district. Regional semantic specification can be found elsewhere in the Arab-speaking world, since lexical items are often related to geographical and social features of a community. To recover regional specifications, food names have been compared with the same forms used in CA – if available – or in other neighbouring Arabic dialects (e.g., Najdi, Yemeni, Gulf). Moreover, roots reckoned as peculiar of the al-ʿAwābī district by the informants have been compared with the

same found in CA or in more ancient Semitic languages (e.g., Sabaic, Akkadian, and Aramaic).

Quadriconsonantal roots, on the other hand, are very interesting because their formation often relies on factors such as onomatopoeic reproduction of sounds, reduplication of roots, and incorporation of foreign loanwords. They seem to have developed differently from their – not common – use in CA.[1]

2. The data and methodology

The material for the present article was obtained through two fieldwork trips made in the district of al-ʿAwābī in 2017 and 2018 and are part of a much larger corpus systematised in my PhD dissertation.[2] The district of al-ʿAwābī lies in the Hajar Mountains range in northern Oman and consists of al-ʿAwābī town and adjacent wadis, the biggest and most inhabited of which is Wādī Banī Kharūṣ. The two places differ significantly in terms of lifestyle and education: the town hosts a generally younger population if compared to the wadi, albeit witnessing a gradual depopulation in the last few decades due to younger people moving to Muscat for work or study. The wadi, instead, is mainly inhabited by older people – on average 60+ - who live on farming (of dates) and breeding (of goats, but sometimes also camels). Therefore, the participants in my study varied from younger literate speakers in al-ʿAwābī town to illiterate elders in Wādī Banī Kharūṣ. Table 1 contains details of the criteria used to recruit the participants for the study:

Speaker	Gender	Age	Origin	Level of Education	Tribe
1	F	58	al-ʿAwābī	illiterate	al-Kharūṣī
2	F	45	Stāl (WBK)	illiterate	al-Kharūṣī
3	F	35	al-ʿAwābī	high school	al-ʿAbrī
4	F	60-70	al-Ramī (WBK)	illiterate	al-ʿAbrī

[1] Cf. Holes 2004.

[2] The dissertation is now available online and includes a complete glossary of al-ˢAwābī Arabic (cf. Morano 2019).

5	F	28	al-ʿAwābī	university	al-Kharūṣī
6	F	38	al-ʿAwābī	university	al-Kharūṣī
7	F	44	al-ʿAwābī	middle school	al-Kharūṣī
8	M	65-75	al-ʿAlya (WBK)	illiterate	al-ʿAbrī
9	F	32	Dakum (WBK)	university	al-Kharūṣī
10	F	55	al-ʿAwābī	middle school	al-Kharūṣī
11	F	45	Stāl (WBK)	high school	al-Kharūṣī
12	F	40	al-ʿAwābī	middle school	al-Kharūṣī
13	M	85-95	Stāl (WBK)	illitterate	al-Kharūṣī
14	F	50-60	Dakum (WBK)	middle school	al-ʿAbrī
15	F	80-90	al-ʿAwābī	illitterate	al-ʿAbrī

Table 1 – Participants' metadata

As the reader will appreciate by the end of this article, it is possible to see numerous differences in lexicon and semantics based on one of these two factors: age of speakers and geographical provenance.

In terms of the methodology employed for the construction of the lexical corpus, I have used elicitation techniques traditionally employed in lexical documentation. One part of the lexical material was extrapolated from live speech recordings, which were transcribed *in situ* with the help of a native speaker and fieldwork notes added for context or other specifications. Another part was, instead, constructed based on word lists compiled per semantic field and based on the data available in Reinhardt (1894). Finally, a smaller part – especially plant names and traditional clothing items – was compiled by direct questions to the speaker, e.g., "What's the name of this?", "What do you call this?", and so on.

The quadriconsonantal roots presented here were collected in the al-ʿAwābī district from all fifteen informants: in the initial stage of the investigation a list of all quadriliteral items provided by Reinhardt (1894) was compiled and then submitted to the consultants. Most of them were recognised by all the speakers, whereas some others were either unknown or shifted in their semantics. In addition, further material was elicited from the audio recordings, where quadriliteral items were fairly common – especially in the speech of middle-aged and older speakers.

3. Archaisms and regional semantic specifications

Omani dialects have always been considered as a separate group within the Arabian Peninsula and are generally known amongst dialectologists for the preservation of many lexical features and vocabulary that got lost in other Arabic vernaculars.[3] The Omani vernacular spoken by my informants is no exceptions in this sense. Table 2.1 shows the archaisms and classicisms found in the informants' speech.

rām/yirūm	to be able to	*rā/yrā*	to see, to dream
rabš (f. rabša)	naughty	*sār/yisīr*	to go
qaḥam	to descend	*yišūm*	to inland

Table 2.1 – Archaisms in the al-ʿAwābī district

The use of CA verbs like *rā* ("to see") instead of the dialectal *šāf*, or *sār* ("to go") instead of *rāḥ* is found in the data only in the speech of the two male informants (i.e., speaker 8 and 13). This appears in contrast with Kaplan's statement that «females of older generations in Bahla tend to use more conservative forms of expression than their male counterparts.»[4] Verbs like *atā* ("to come") instead of *gā* are of common occurrence in the speech of all informants in the villages of Wādī Banī Kharūṣ, whereas people from al-ʿAwābī tend to use *gā*, with no regards to level of education in both cases.

The verb *yišūm* ("to go inland") is only used in the p-stem form and is considered obsolescent by all the speakers: the origin of the verb is not certain, one possible hypothesis is from the CA root Š'M, which Biberstein-Kazimirski reports with the meaning "to go to Syria" (i.e., Bilād aš-Šām) in Form IV *ašām*.[5] There is no account in the data of the s-stem form of this verb, however "going inland" from Oman would necessarily entail "going north" (towards Syria).

[3] Cf. Holes 2017, 290 and Morano 2022, 31-33.
[4] Kaplan 2008, 266.
[5] Biberstein-Kazimirski 1860, 1179.

The root RYM, used in the district with the meaning of "to be able to", derives from the same root which in Sabaic indicates "to overlook" (cf. Beeston 1982: 120). The verb *rām* is widespread both in al-ʿAwābī and in Wādī Banī Kharūṣ, and it is used to indicate the ability to fulfil an action, as opposed to *qadar* ("can").[6] Finally, the word *rabš/rabšah* ("naughty"), specifically used in al-ʿAwābī to address kids, might be of Akkadian derivation (i.e., *rabāšu* "to protest").[7]

Some regional semantic specialisations of lexicon can be found in food and animal names, and only partially in verbs, as presented in Table 2.2 below:

zaytūn	guava	*ʿayš* ~ *ʿīš*	rice
furṣād	mulberries	*nimr*	Arabian leopard
waʿl	ibex	*bisbās*	green pepper
ġurġur	peas	*filfil rumī*	green pepper

Table 2.2 – Regional semantic specialisations (animal and food names)

The noun *zaytūn* in Arabic indicates the "olive", but in the area under investigation denotes the "guava", a tropical fruit very common in the region.[8]

The term *ʿayš* indicates in Arabic, among other things, "nourishment", from the root ʿYŠ ("to live, be alive"). In the district, *ʿayš* is always used to mean "rice".[9] This lexical item is a clear example of semantic specialisation throughout the Arab world: in Egypt and in Yemen, it indicates the "barley bread", in Sudan the "millet" and a kind of "puree" in the Sahara Desert.[10] This is a good example of semantic specialisation based on

[6] For more details of the functions of *rām* in this variety of Arabic, see Morano 2022, 211-212.

[7] Cf. Holes 2006, 31.

[8] People in the district refer to the "olive" as *zaytūn aḫḍar*, literally "green guava".

[9] Children and adults addressing kids may occasionally use the word *rizz* to indicate "rice".

[10] Cf Morano 2019, 196.

sociocultural factors, since basic food changes from country to country depending on geographical and meteorological factors.

In the food semantic field, we also notice the term *bisbās*, which is used to indicate the "green pepper" in Wādī Banī Kharūṣ (cf. CA *basbās* for "fennel"), whereas in al-ʿAwābī speakers tend to use *filfil rumī* for the same vegetable. The term *furṣād* is "berries" for all my speakers, although in some other parts of Oman is also used to indicate the "grapefruit".[11] Finally, interesting is the noun *ġurġur* for "peas", used by all my consultants and throughout the district: in other parts of Oman people use *basillah*.

A few other semantic specialisations are visible in the names of animals like *nimr*, in the district used as both the generic "tiger" and the highly endangered "South Arabian leopard";[12] and the term *waʿl* is used by the informants to indicate the "ibex". Amongst the speakers of the town, the "Arabian oryx" is called *mahā*, and the "gazelle" is *ġazāl*.

Some regional traits can also be found in verbs – albeit at a lower extent – such as *qaḥam* ("to come down, descend"). Reckoned as obsolescent by the young and middle-aged groups of informants, *qaḥam* is only used by older people in al-ʿAwābī, and it derives from the root QḤM "to hurry, to venture", although it shifted its usage in the semantics. The two compound verbs *tīb / ytīb* ("to bring") and *gīb / ygīb* ("to give") are of common occurrence in the speech of my informants: these verbs are formed adding the particle *bi-* to the verb directly (i.e., *atā* + *bi* and *gā* + *bi*), and are very common in the data (e.g., *atīb qahwa hinā* "I bring coffee here" [S14]; *tgīb l-ek* "she gives you (MSG)" [S10]).[13]

A further semantic field where it is possible to detect regional traits is the geographical one, including names of the winds and cardinal points, as shown in Table 2.3:

[11] There is no written evidence of this. It has only been confirmed by my younger informants.

[12] Cf. CA, "leopard" or "panther", Biberstein-Kazimirski 1860, 1347.

[13] The verb *gīb/ygīb* also presents a passive standardised form to mean "to give birth", e.g., *anā gubt ṯalāṯa awlād* (lit. "I was given three children" [S2]).

kōs	south-east wind	*sāfil*	North
ezyeb	northern wind	*ʿālī*	North
ʿilwā	South	*ḥadrā*	South
bill	spring	*saḥāb*	cloud

Table 2.3 – Regional semantic specialisations (geographical names)

The word *ezyeb* is "northern wind"; however, it indicates the warm "south-western wind" in the neo-Arabic dialect of the Red Sea and, in a similar way, the Ethiopic *azêb* is "eastern wind", as in ʿAdanī Arabic (Yemen).[14]

The names of cardinal points differ between al-ʿAwābī and Wādī Banī Kharūṣ: *sāfil* ("North") is used by the older informants living in the wadi, whereas the town counterpart is *ʿālī*; young and middle-aged speakers, instead, tend to use the general *šamāl*. The same can be said for *ʿilwā* ("South") used by older speakers in the wadi, and *ḥadrā* is widespread, instead, in the town amongst my older informants; young and middle-aged speakers tend to use *ganūb*. The "clouds" are indicated with the term *saḥāb* by my informants in the elders' group – regardless of provenance or level of education – whereas middle-aged and younger people use the word *ġammah*. Finally, the word *bill* indicates the "blossom of the lemon tree", but its semantics has been widened to indicate the "spring season", both in al-ʿAwābī and Wādī Banī Kharūṣ.

With regards to the provenance of the speakers, it is possible to find some differences in semantic fields like household items and animal/insects: [15]

Household			Insects and Animals		
WBK	English	AW	WBK	English	AW
ḥigrah ~ ḥugrah	room	*ġurfah*	*garād*	grasshopper	*šangūb*
dahrīz	sitting room	*ṣalah*	*ʿanfūf*	small bat	*ḫaffāš*
kašrah	rubbish	*zibālah*	*surṭān il-baḥr*	crab	*šangūb il-baḥr*

[14] Morano 2017, 189.

[15] These items were elicited with all the consultants involved in this study.

briq	coffee-pot	*delleh*	*abū barīṣ*	small lizard	*šaḥlūb*
			šamaṣ	green lizard	*ḍebb*

Table 2.4 – Areal semantic specialisations (household and insects)

As Table 2.4 shows, areal semantic specialisation is as developed as regional semantic specialisation, although involves primarily the fields here presented. Admittedly, some of these items distinguish also depending on the age of the speaker: for example, *kašrah* is mainly used by the older informants' group in Wādī Banī Kharūṣ, whereas *zibālah* is widespread amongst young and middle-aged speakers. The term *briq* indicates specifically the Arabian coffee-pot used in villages of Wādī Banī Kharūṣ, as opposed to the *delleh*, which is the plastic thermos flask women bring around when visiting neighbours. Finally, to note is the specific names used for "crab", which is interesting since the al-ʿAwābī district is a mountainous region, quite far from the sea.

Traditional medicine offers a wide range of terms specifically used for diseases cured by the *wasm* ("cauterisation"), still a widespread – but fast disappearing – practice in Wādī Banī Kharūṣ which entails the burning of specific parts of the body to heal the patient.[16] Table 2.5 lists the names of diseases cured by cauterisation in Wādī Banī Kharūṣ and the parts of the body:

Parts of the body		Diseases	
qafed	nape	*šīṣah*	thrombosis
mōḫrah	nose	*ḥummah al-halāliyyah*	high and persistent fever
ṯum	mouth	*šaqīqah*	migraine
rīḥ	hernia	*ġašyah*	gastritis
garrīn	throat	*luʿan*	nausea
ʿarq an-nisā	sciatic nerve	*muʿāldah*	asthma
šiffah or mezbel	lip	*ḥmūḍah*	heartburn

Table 2.5 – Names of diseases and body parts

[16] For more details on this topic, the reader is referred to the work by Ghazanfar 1995.

These lexical items have been collected in Stāl, in Wādī Banī Kharūṣ, with speakers 11 and 14, who practised the *wasm* to the wadi inhabitants, and to some extent, to town people as well. The term *mezbel* for "lip" is only used by older speakers (i.e., speakers 4, 8, 13 and 15), whereas all the others use the term *šiffah*.

Vollers[17] identifies a few traits of Southern Arabic in the dialect described by Reinhardt,[18] such as the root RTʾ, "to remain, stay",[19] or nouns like *sabarah* "morning chill", and *ġabšah* "early morning, dusk", which are still found in the speech of my older informants (i.e., speakers 4, 8, 13, 15).

There are nouns found in other Arabic dialects but used in my data with a different meaning, such as: the root ĞMʿ used here as "to sweep"[20], from which the words *mgummaʿah* ("broom") and *gummaʿ* ("rubbish") derive.

Finally, there are words with a different meaning from CA but found also in other Arabic dialects: the adjectives like *šēn* "ugly" and *zēn* "beautiful, good", respectively monophthongised forms of *šayn* and *zayn*.[21]

With regards to the criteria used to recruit informants for this study, provenance – more than age or level of education – seems to be a determining factor in the choice of one specific term over another, especially in semantic fields like geographical and agricultural names. However, a few more lexical items found only in the speech of informants from the elders' group (i.e., speakers 4, 8, 13 and 15) are shown in the following table:

[17] Vollers 1895, 509.

[18] Reinhardt, 1894.

[19] Cf. Beeston 1982, 118: *RTʿ "post, station (of troops, guards)".

[20] The root ĞMʿ in CA means "to gather, to comprehend" (cf. Biberstein-Kazimirski 1860, 326). Based on the meaning of the root, its use in the district refers to the action of "collecting, gathering" dust while sweeping the floor.

[21] In CA, the noun *šayn* means "disgrace", thus the development as an adjective meaning "bad, ugly" is clearly explicable; the same happens with the noun *zayn*, which in CA indicates "beauty, ornament" and it passed to mean in everyday speech "beautiful".

ʿarab/ʿorbān	Bedouin people	*ġāwi*	beautiful, excellent
rōzne	shelf in the wall	*dawīn*	very much
bahyūt	much, more		

Table 2.6 – Obsolescent lexical items

These items are reckoned as completely obsolescent by the other two groups of consultants, who tend to use *wāgid* for "much, more", and *gamīl* for "beautiful".

4. Quadriconsonantal roots

A significant part of the lexicon I have collected in the al-ʿAwābī district consisted of quadriliteral-rooted items.[22] Starting from Reinhardt's rich core of quadriconsonantal items,[23] three items changed in meaning, according to the data: i.e., *rengwen* ("bell" in Reinhardt) indicates the "cuckoo clock" in the speech of my informants; *gilgil* means "anklet" today rather than "bell" (as reported by Reinhardt); and finally, *dorwāz*, which in Reinhardt stands for "entrance", indicates "mall, big marketplace" in the data.

In the data, quadriconsonantal roots involve primarily verbs and nouns, and, in a few instances, adjectives (e.g., *berḍūl* "lazy").

In the domain of nouns, the vernacular under investigation shows quadriconsonantal-rooted items in the following semantic categories:

- name of birds, insects, and animals (e.g., *ṣafṣūf* "sparrow"; *šangūb* "grasshopper"; *ṣarṣur* "cockroach"; *qarqūr* "shark"; *fanzūz* "weevil");
- fruits and vegetables (e.g., *mišmiš* "apricot", *bisbās* "green pepper", *sumsum* "sesame"; *furṣāḍ* "berries"; *kummitra* "pear"; *sanṭara* "tangerine", *findāl* "sweet potato");
- plants (e.g., *naʿnaʿ* "mint", *ġāġā* "Mentha Longifolia"; *mranḥa* "Thorn apple");

[22] The whole glossary presented in my PhD dissertation counted at least 200 quadriliteral stems, and a few that count five or six consonants (e.g., *barqandūš* "marjoram", *sfargal* "quince", *ḥliklik* "small black lizard").

[23] Reinhardt 1894, 253-254.

- clothing and accessories (e.g., *nafnuf* "woman's over-garment"; *ʿarʿur* "golden pendant", *gilgil* "anklet made of little bells", *dišdāša* "long garment for men"; *ḫarḫuš* "rattle for children"; *ḫanger* "dagger"; *šanṭūṭ* "ribbon", *dantal* "dress rim adorned with stones or pearls");
- nature (e.g., *tartar* "sand");
- material (e.g., *brism* "nylon", *tšinko* "corrugated iron");
- loanwords (e.g., *kurfāya* "bed", *hanqrī* "rich", *drīwal* "driver").

As briefly exemplified by this list, the quadriliteral items in use in the district are built on two patterns, i.e., $C_1C_2C_3C_4$ (e.g., *ḫanger*) and $C_1C_2C_1C_2$ (e.g., *mišmiš*). The former can be the result of loanword incorporation[24]; whereas the latter shows reduplication of a basic biradical cluster.

Linguists have different views on reduplication, and the debate deals mainly with the differentiation between reduplication itself and other phenomena of repetition. Reduplication can be full or partial: the repetition of a whole word (e.g., in the vernacular under investigation the expression *sēm sēm* "the same as")[25] constitutes full reduplication, whilst a partial reduplication sees the repetition of only a segment, or syllable, of a certain structure.[26] In the data under investigation, when it comes to reduplicate quadriliteral roots, two main vocalic patterns can be found: in one instance, the whole syllable is repeated entirely (e.g., *miš* in *mišmiš*) without any change in the vowel structure; in another, the vowel in the syllable cluster changes and the pattern becomes CaCCuC (e.g., *nafnuf*) or CiCCāC (e.g. *dišdāša*).

[24] There are no current studies that investigate the origin of $C_1C_2C_3C_4$-patterned quadriliteral nouns in CA and in the modern vernaculars, and in many instances, it is difficult to go back up to the original item, if it ever existed.

[25] This expression derives from Indian English: it is not English as such, but it is widespread in many Asian countries (e.g., India, Indonesia, South-East Asia, etc.), where English has been spoken.

[26] The same phenomenon is also visible in Indo-European languages, for example in the English word *flip-flop*, where it is only the vowel pattern that changes, and the consonantal pattern is repeated.

The plant name *malḥlaḥ* (ملحلح, "Dyerophytum Indicum"), in the data, is an interesting case in terms of reduplication: it derives its name from the whitish powder very similar to salt which covers the leaves, much used in some villages of the wadi as a substitute for salt in cooking.[27] The peculiarity of this name is that the reduplication only involves the second and the third radicals of the word *malḥ* ("salt"), following a $C_1C_2C_3C_2C_3$ and thus creating a five-rooted lexical item. The same phenomenon is visible in the name of a "small black lizard", i.e., *ḥliklik*: again, the repetition involves only the second and third consonants. However, in the first example, the basic word *malḥ* indicates the actual "whitish powder" (i.e., salt), hence the origin is easily identifiable. In the second example, though, the word *ḥlik* by itself has no meaning and according to the informants is originated by an onomatopoeic reproduction of the lizard sounds.[28] In this regard, Prochazka states that reduplication is one of the main means that a language has to describe non-linguistic states or processes.[29] According to Butts (2011: 100), the pattern $C_1C_2C_3C_2C_3$ is "relatively rare" in Arabic and, when found, relates to adjectives expressing colours or physical defects. Looking at the examples found in the district of al-ʿAwābī, we can see that both the plant and the animal names refer to a specific characteristic of the item in question, reflecting it in the semantics.

It is probably in verbs that all the richness in values of quadriconsonantal-rooted items is best shown. In the data, it is possible to find two basic forms and two derivate forms for quadriliteral verbs, i.e., $C_1C_2C_3C_4$ (e.g., *gerdef* "to force, compel"; *zeḥlaq* "to slip, slide") and $C_1C_2C_1C_2$ (e.g., *defdef* "to push"; *salsal* "to trickle"); $tC_1C_2C_3C_4$ (e.g., *trengaḥ* "to swing"; *trambal* "to hang out") and $tC_1C_2C_1C_2$ (e.g., *tzelzel* "to tremble, shake"; *tšemšem* "to smell").

[27] Many plant names in the district derive directly from a specific feature of the plant involved, which may be the shape of the leaves, their colour, the smell they produce or also the uses people make of them.

[28] Onomatopoeia is one of the main sources for the formation of quadriliteral roots in Semitic. Cf. Holes 2016.

[29] Prochazka 1995: 46.

Quadriliteral verbs in the data can be found in the following semantic categories[30] (the verbs also reported by Reinhardt are indicated with their page number):

- Motion: *tzaḥzaḥ* "to move, make some space"; *tzelzel* "to shake, tremble" [R.255]; *dagḋagḋ* "to tickle" [R.255]; *derbeg* "to run"; *trengaḥ* "to swing" [R.253]; *zeḥlaq* "to slip, slide"; *tsensaḥ* "to slither" [R.253]; *tsemḥal* "to proceed with care"; *tbešbeš* "to get dressed"; *defdef* "to push"; *ṣabṣub* "to pour, spread"; *ṭṭaḥṭaḥ* "to drop" (<**ṭṭaḥṭaḥ*); *ṭaḥṭoḥ* "to blow on something (to make it cooler)"; *ṭġanḍar* "to faint"; *farfur* "to flutter"; *tfaqfaq* "to cackle (with laughter)" [R.255]; *twarwar* "to throw"; *beršem* "to sneer, pull a face" [R.254]
- Physical qualities and states: *ṭḥamḥam* "to cough intermittently" [R.255]; *ddebdeb* "to have bumps on the body" (<**tdebdeb*) [R.254]; *saqsaq* "to have diarrhoea" [R.254]; *tsemsem* "to swell up and itch (of a bite)"; *šaḥšaḥ* "to urinate frequently" [R.254]; *ṭḥarqaṣ* "to be badly afflicted" [R. 255]; *zengar* "to be quiet"; *tšaḥreg* "to have oppressive cough"; *ddehdar* "to confuse" (<**tdehdar*); *ġarġar* "to rattle"; *kezkez* "to shiver";
- Acoustic phenomena: *zaqzaq* "to chirp"; *salsal* "to trickle"; *šaṭšaṭ* "to crackle, sizzle (of meat)" [R.254];
- Miscellanea[31]: *ṭḥalḥel* "to shrink"; *traḥraḥ* "to take rest"; *tšemšem* "to smell" [R.255]; *tbehlel* "to shine"; *gerdef* "to force, compel" [R.254]; *ḫarwaṣ* "to get something dirty"; *tdelhem* "to get cloudy"; *trambal* "to hang out"; *tzaḫraf* "to decorate", *selheb* "to embitter, exacerbate".

As this list shows, quadriliteral verbs, as nouns, can be formed by reduplication.

According to Holes, many quadriliterals of this type are derived from doubled verbs, "and represent extensive, intensive or repetitive extensions of the meanings of the corresponding

[30] These categories are based on those presented by Prochazka 1995 for reduplicative verbs.

[31] These are verbs that do not fit in any of the categories above.

doubled verbs".[32] In the data under investigation, however, this type of origin is valid for a few quadriliteral reduplicated verbs, both in their basic or derived forms: *zaqzaq* "to chirp", which can be related to the CA *zaqqa* "to feed (of birds)";[33] and *tšemšem* "to smell", from the CA *šamma* "to smell, sniff".[34]

Quadriliteral verbs with a more intensive value compared to their corresponding geminate verb are: *šaḥšaḥ* "to urinate frequently" from the CA *šaḥḥa* "to urinate"[35] and *tregreg* "to wiggle back and forth" from the CA *rağğa* "to shake".[36] The verb *salsal* "to trickle", reported by Brockett (1985: 125) and found in use also in the speech of my informants, can be considered one of the very few examples of reduplication from a weak verb, i.e., *sāl* "to pour".[37]

5. Conclusions

This article intended to be a first step in the direction of lexicon analysis and did not aim to show the full range of qualities and peculiarities of Omani Arabic – which still deserves proper attention by scholars.

Amongst the criteria chosen for the recruitment of informants, provenance seems to be the highest factor of differentiation in the lexicon relating to household items, animals and insects and cardinal points. Regional specifications are not new to the Arab world since they depend on numerous external factors, such as environment, landscape, and speakers' lifestyle. In the area under investigation, some interesting ones have been found in the domain of food.

[32] Holes 2016, 170. The derivation from doubled verbs is also reported by Prochazka 1995, 62-65.

[33] Cf. Biberstein-Kazimirski 1860, 998.

[34] Cf. *Ibid.*, 1264.

[35] Cf. *Ibid.*, 1200.

[36] Cf. *Ibid.*, 822. The basic forms reported here from CA are not in use in the dialect under investigation, but they are shown only as evidence for the origin of these specific quadriliteral verbs.

[37] Holes 2016, 173.

Known among dialectologists for preserving numerous traits that have been lost in other Arabic dialects, the Peninsular vernaculars show a rich array of classicisms and archaisms. This Omani dialect demonstrated not to be an exception, showcasing some very distinctive traits in the verb domain.

Finally, quadriliteral roots were very prolific in the data collected in the district, still being very productive in a wide variety of lexical fields.

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Typical Lexical Components in Modern Spoken Egyptian Judeo-Arabic, with Some Parallels in Judeo Italian

GABRIEL M. ROSENBAUM

My long and intensive work with many informants, native speakers of Egyptian Judeo-Arabic (EJA), and also non-Jewish native speakers of Colloquial Egyptian-Arabic (CEA), has shown that EJA is a unique and distinct spoken Egyptian variety, different in grammar and vocabulary from CEA (Cairene and other Egyptian-Arabic dialects). Here I mainly discuss EJA Hebraisms (Hebrew words or words of Hebrew origin), their sources, and usage. The influence of Romance languages on EJA vocabulary is also briefly mentioned.

Some EJA Hebraisms have gone through changes in form, meaning, or pronunciation, or in all, as is the case with many borrowed Hebrew words in other spoken Jewish languages. Some other Hebraisms and lexical components were invented by their Jewish speakers.

Lexical components, and sometimes also grammatical patterns, often appear next to each other or are mixed together, and thus give rise to the creation of lexical combinations unique to EJA. Quite a few words, phrases and mixed combinations are shared by other Jewish languages, since they are borrowed by speakers of various dialects from the same Hebrew sources: The Bible, the prayer book, other old Jewish holy writ, and vocabulary connected to Jewish life and traditions. Contact among various Jewish communities may contribute to mutual linguistic influences, too.

This study also refers to the first chapter in Primo Levi' s *Il sistema periodico* ("The Periodic Table") and his vivid description of the Jewish dialect of Piedmont, and to Mayer Modena' s *Vena Hebraica* – together with EJA they all show how various Jewish languages reflect similar linguistic and cultural phenomena. Quite a few EJA words and phrases reflect the humoristic inclination of Jews, as is also seen in the examples given by Primo Levi and Mayer Modena.

Keywords: Spoken Egyptian Judeo-Arabic (EJA) – Colloquial Egyptian-Arabic (CEA) –Hebraisms – Lexical innovations – Judeo-Italian

1. Introduction

1.1 This study

This study, based on long and intensive work with many informants, native speakers of Egyptian Judeo Arabic (EJA), and also non-Jewish native speakers of Colloquial Egyptian Arabic (CEA), focuses on some aspects of EJA, mainly its unique vocabulary, sources and usage, with some comparisons to Judeo-Italian.

Until recently, linguists accepted that the language spoken by Egyptian Jews did not differ, or differed only minimally, from the variety spoken by their non-Jewish neighbors, as stated by Haim Blanc.[1] Blanc, however, in his preliminary and pioneering studies on the language of Egyptian Jews,[2] laid the foundations for the study of the Judeo-Egyptian Arabic spoken variety, but still was not sure that the variety he described could be defined as "Judeo-Arabic", because he worked with a small group of informants and did not have the chance to confirm his findings with a larger sample of speakers, and stated that at that time there was no reason to assume that features of the variety he investigated did not occur among non-Jews;[3] he also noted that he did not find many Hebraisms (Hebrew words or words of Hebrew origin).

Years later, since the beginning of the 1990s, I had the chance to work with many informants (Egyptian Jews, Muslims and Christians), and could confirm Blanc's assumptions, and that in fact the Jews did speak a unique variety of their own, "Egyptian Judeo-Arabic" (EJA), as was the case with other varieties spoken by the Jews in the Middle East and elsewhere. I also found many Hebraisms, often with changes in form or meaning, or in both, as is the case with many borrowed words and phrases in other spoken Jewish languages. Such changes may result from lack of thorough knowledge of Hebrew, but are often also due to speakers'

[1] Blanc's words within a discussion on Jewish languages; see Rabin *et al* 1979, 50.
[2] Mainly Blanc 1974; 1981; 1984.
[3] Blanc 1974, 207.

creativity or humorous inclination. Words and phrases in Arabic are sometimes mixed with Hebrew words, which together create phrases that are unique to the Jewish spoken variety. The words and phrases described below are just a few typical examples (grammar is only briefly mentioned here).

EJA is, in fact, a distinct variety of CEA. The major suppliers of the EJA vocabulary are CEA, Hebrew and, to a lesser extent, the Romance languages spoken around the Mediterranean: French, Italian, and Judeo-Spanish, known as Ladino or Judezmo, that will only briefly be mentioned here.[4]

1.2 The speakers of Egyptian Judeo-Arabic

The Jews in modern Egypt were not all of one piece. There were two separate communities, the larger rabbinical community, and the smaller Karaite one, whose variety contained terminology that was not known to the rabbinical Jews. Here I concentrate on the vocabulary of the rabbinical Jews.[5]

Most rabbinical Jews lived in Cairo and Alexandria, and came from diverse social and economic backgrounds. The largest community of Jews lived in the Jewish quarter in Cairo (*ḥart il-yahūd*: "The Jewish Quarter"), and some other Jewish neighborhoods in Cairo and Alexandria, and also in a few towns in the Delta. Most Karaites lived in a separate small quarter next to the rabbinical one in Cairo (*ḥart il-yahūd il-ʔarrayīn*: "The quarter of Karaite Jews"). Jews whose social and economic status improved, often moved to live in more upscale neighborhoods. The main preservers of EJA were the Jews who lived in the Cairene Jewish quarter and other neighborhoods with a large Jewish population. Quite a few Jews also spoke other languages, mainly French, and also Ladino, Italian and English.

[4] On this see Rosenbaum 2018, and below, section 9.2. On the use of Hebrew and Arabic in spoken EJA see Blanc 1974; 1981; 1985; Rosenbaum 2002b, *et alia.*

[5] On the language of the rabbinical Jews see also Blanc 1974; 1981; 1985; Rosenbaum 2002b, *et alia.* On the language of the Karaite Jews see Rosenbaum 2019; all are based on sections from my larger forthcoming study on EJA.

1.3 A note on the transliteration

Gemination in words of both Arabic and Hebrew origin is marked with a double consonant; the stress in words of Hebrew origin is marked with an acute accent above the vowel in the stressed syllable, e.g. *kippúr* ("The day of atonement"). Accents in Judeo-Italian words are preserved as in the original texts. The Arabic definite article is transliterated according to the EJA/CEA pronunciation. The consonant B, that may be either plosive or fricative in Hebrew, is always plosive in EJA, and accordingly transliterated B. Fricative Hebrew V ("vav") is usually fricative in EJA and transliterated V.

2. Talking about Jews and non-Jews - Between Piedmont and Cairo

2.1 Jews and Non-Jews in Il sistema periodico

Since this article is to be published in Italy, and since it deals with a distinct spoken Jewish variety that also reflects the culture and humor of its speakers, I feel that it is appropriate to open it with a few examples of the Jewish dialect of Piedmont, Italy, presented by Primo Levi, the famous Italian-Jewish scientist (chemist) and writer, in his book *Il sistema periodico* ("The Periodic Table"), and also to demonstrate some selected parallels from other Judeo-Italian dialects, quoted from Mayer Modena's *Vena Hebraica* (2022). There are many parallels in other Jewish languages that are not quoted here.[6]

At the outset of *Il sistema periodico*, within a vivid description of the unique language spoken by the Piedmontese Jews, Primo Levi describes "Christendom as a whole" (*l'intera cristianità*) with two terms of Hebrew origin used by the Jews in Piedmont: *gôjìm* and *ñarelìm*, both defined by him as *le "genti", i "non-circoncisi"* ("the non-Jews, the uncircumcised").[7]

[6] See, e.g., Maman 2019.
[7] Levi 2014, 5.

On the face of it, the latter term, *ñarelìm*, refers to Christians only, because they are uncircumcised, while the meaning of the first one, *gôjìm*, may be ambiguous (see next section), but this is made clear when the author tells about a Jew who married a *gôiá* (fem. of *gôi*) as follows:

> Il Gnôr Grassiadiô […] si vergognava un poco di essere ebreo, ed aveva sposato una gôià, e cioè una cristiana"
> Gnôr [abbrev. of Signor: "Mr."] Grassiadio […] was a bit ashamed of being a Jew and had married a goya, that is, a Christian.[8]

2.2 Jews, non-Jews, and elements of secret languages in Egypt

The first two typical Judeo-Egyptian words that I discuss here are, following Levi's description, the EJA pair *goy* and *ʕarél* (also in the very common version *ʕarér*, with the consonant R replacing the consonant L), that are parallels to Piedmontese *gôi* and *ñarel*, respectively.

While in Europe several generations ago both terms could denote "non-Jews" in general, and "Christians" in particular, many Jewish speakers in Egypt (and other Arabic speaking countries in the Middle East) made a distinction between Muslims, Christians, and also themselves. The word *goy*, which in Biblical Hebrew means "nation; people" (also the people of Israel!), in Jewish languages (including modern Hebrew), came to refer generally to non-Jews; and when all of the non-Jews in a certain country or region were Christians, this term could be used and understood as "Christian", too. Conversely, in Egypt, a Muslim country with a large Christian minority, the words *goy* and *ʕarél*/*ʕarér*, were often used to distinguish between Muslims and Christians, respectively. Still, there were EJA speakers who understood and used both terms in the meaning of "non-Jew", "not one of us", as is in fact the case in Levi's description.[9]

[8] *Ibid.*, 7; 1984, 7-8.
[9] Cf. "arel" and "goi" in Mayer Modena 2022, 55-57.

A modern addition to Judeo-Italian in the twentieth century was the phrase *goi gadol* (lit.: "Big goy"), used as a nickname for Mussolini.[10]

The words *goy* and *ʕarél/ʕarér* in Egypt also served as components of a secret language used in the presence or upon the approach of non-Jews, or in order to avoid saying words that might put Jews into trouble. Egyptian Jews also invented another term, *ʔatón* (perhaps taken from Hebrew *ʔaton*, "female donkey"), that referred to any non-Jew and was mostly used to report on the presence or the approach of a non-Jew, also as a warning to be careful and avoid saying words that might put Jews into trouble. Another term of this sort was *ben ʕammenu* (Heb., lit.: "one of our people"), used to denote "a Jew", also as a component of the secret language, to deliver the message that a certain person is a Jew, "one of us". This term sounds similar to *ʔibn-i ʕammina* ("The son of our [paternal] uncle", i.e. "our cousin") in Egyptian Arabic, and thus usually did not attract the attention of non-Jews. In a conversation I had many years ago in Cairo with an elderly Egyptian Muslim who had contact with the Jews, he told me that he heard the latter term said by Jews and understood that it meant "our cousin", i.e. a reference to a non-Jewish Egyptian, in that case himself.

3. Some other elements of secret languages

A common word used as a secret language element in EJA is the verb *šáttaʔ* (in the second form, in the imperative), derived from the Hebrew root š-t-q and the verb *šataq*, ("to be quiet, to be silent"), i.e. "don't speak about this now, so that the non-Jew won't hear". Another word with similar usage is *beláḥaš* (Heb., lit: "in a whisper"), which is how the *il-ʕamidá* ("the standing prayer"), also known in Hebrew as *šemoné ʔesré* ("eighteen [blessings]"), should be said, without the worshipper being heard. In EJA, therefore, *beláḥaš* became a nickname of this prayer, and also a signal to

[10] Mayer Modena 2022, 129.

report on the approach of a stranger and to speak softly in order not to be heard.

The most highly developed Jewish secret language in Egypt is that of the goldsmiths, that has been used for centuries by Jewish Karaite goldsmiths, and is still in use by non-Jewish goldsmiths and some other merchants.[11]

4. Bible and religion as a source for EJA vocabulary

4.1 Examples of biblical expressions in EJA

Many phrases taken from the Bible were used in daily speech, by speakers who had good knowledge of the Bible and by those who had not such a knowledge. The three following phrases, taken from the Bible, were common in daily speech.

a. *Tóho vabóhu* ("chaos, disorder"); KJV: [The earth was] Without form, and void (*Genesis* 1: 2, and *Jeremiah* 4:23]; Heb: תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ).
b. *hebel habalim* ("nonsense", "meaningless words"; *Koheleth* (*Ecclesiastes*), 1:2; 5:6); Heb. הֶבֶל הֲבָלִים (*havel havalim*); KJV: "vanity of vanities". In both phrases, the Hebrew fricative consonant B is pronounced as plosive B in EJA.
c. The phrase *ʔéšet ḥáyil*, also (more rarely) in the version *ʔéšet ḥáyim*, with the consonant *M* replacing the consonant L in the second word, "woman of valor" (*Proverbs* 31:10; Heb.: אֵשֶׁת-חַיִל), has been used by Egyptian Jews to refer to a righteous, pious woman, loyal to her husband and family. This expression in EJA refers more to a woman's moral virtues than to the skills enumerated in *Proverbs* (31:10-31).[12]

4.2 Bible, prayer, and religion

Some biblical verses also appear in prayers and are quoted in other holy writ, and thus are often present in Jewish life. One of

[11] See Rosenbaum 2002a and below, section 12.
[12] Cf Mayer Modena 2022, 113: *Esced chail* ("donna di valor").

these is the biblical phrase *tippól ʕalehém ʔemáta vafáḥad* ("Fear and dread shall fall upon them"; Exodus 15:16; KJV). The reference here is to the nations that are potential enemies of the people of Israel, and in modern times also to those who hate the Jews. This verse also appears in the Jewish prayer book as a part of the monthly ritual *Birkát ha-levaná* ("Blessing of the moon"), also called *qiddush levaná.* ("Sanctification of the moon"). It is more commonly used in the shorter version *tippól ʕalehém* ("shall befall them"), in the same meanings as above. Both versions are components of EJA vocabulary and are known to many of its speakers.

The Hebrew verb *tippól*, which is in the imperfect, may also be used in EJA as a noun, preceded by the Arabic definite article, to denote a very difficult situation, as in *ʔiḥna fi -t-tippól* ("we are in a bad condition"); *id-dolār nizil fi -t-tippól* ("The dollar [exchange rate] fell"). It may also mean "a blow or a calamity from Heaven", "a punishment by God", as in *yigilhum it-tippól* ("may they be punished [by God]"; "may a calamity befall them").

4.3 Oath formulas

There are many oath formulas used by the Jews of Egypt, most of which are different from those used by Muslims and Christians.[13] These formulas, in most cases, consist of Hebrew components preceded by an Arabic oath particle, the most common being *wi-* (alternatively *we-*, *wu-* and *wa-*, all meaning "by...", "by the…", "I swear by…"); for example *wi-l-muṣḥāf* (with a long vowel *ā*, not to be confused with *muṣḥaf*, with a short vowel *a*, a copy of the Quran): "I swear by the [Jewish] prayer book"). This oath particle functions similarly to the Hebrew oath particle *be-*, also used in EJA, but is less common than *wi-* etc, and to the Italian oath particle "per".[14] Another Arabic oath word is *wiḥyāt-* ("by the life of...", "I swear by the life of..."), usually followed by the name of a

[13] See Rosenbaum 2012.
[14] See Mayer Modena 2022, 331.

famous person in Jewish history, local rabbis, other important figures in the history of a certain community, or family members.

The Hebrew oath particle *be-*, mentioned above, appears in the common oath formula *beʔemét ha-torá* ("by the truth of the Torah").

Oaths that invoke the Torah scrolls are very common, as in *wes-séfer*; *wes-sefarím*, *wes-séfer kal nidré*, also: *kannidré*: "I swear by the Torah (scroll), I swear by [all of the] Torah (scrolls), I swear by the Torah scroll of the "Kol Nidre" ("All Vows" prayer), that is being taken out of the Holy Ark on the eve of the Day of Atonement, just before sunset)", respectively;[15] the latter formula, in its two versions, *kal nidré* and *kannidré*), is regarded as the strongest and most binding oath.[16]

5. Mixing Hebrew and Arabic in EJA phrases

The two main suppliers of vocabulary to EJA are Hebrew and (Egyptian) Arabic, and these are often mixed in EJA phrases and expressions. As is often the case in EJA, religion is ever present in the background:

a. *id-déber fīhum* (The definite article and the second word are in CEA, and the first word is in Hebrew). The consonant B in the Hebrew word *dever* (דֶּבֶר*), is fricative, and plosive in EJA: déber ("plague,* murrain*"). Dever* is the name of the fifth of the ten plagues which God brought down on Egypt, that killed a large number of cattle and other animals, defined as "a very grievous murrain" (*Exodus* 9: 3; KJV).
In its EJA version, *déber*, this term appears in derogatory phrases, when referring to a large number of people, large size, quantity that is considered exaggerated, etc.: *id-déber fīhum* ("may the murrain come upon them") is said when referring to a large group of people, especially enemies of the Jewish people, or when coming across a large group of unwanted people. In the singular, the phrase *id-déber fīh*, or in the shorter version *id-déber*, (lit.: "The plague"; "the murrain"), may be said

[15] Cf. *ibid.*

[16] The formula with *kal nidré* is also quoted, among others, in Mayer Modena 2022, 331: "Per il sefer Cal Nidre".

upon seeing somebody who eats a huge amount of food, coming across a very large person, etc. In such circumstances, this phrase may mean "The hell with him"; "He is too (big, large, fat, etc.)", said in disapproval or dislike.

b. In the mixed phrase *Séfer malfūf*, the first word is in Hebrew, and the second is in CEA; It means "a rolled up and dressed Torah scroll", and in EJA is also a metaphor for a righteous and God-fearing man, but is often used in the opposite meaning, or in the phrase *ʕāmil nafsu zayy-i -s-séfer il-malfūf* ("he pretends to be a righteous man").

c. *rama -l-ʕavonót*, lit.: "threw away his sins" (the verb is in CEA, and the noun [in the plural] is in Hebrew). This phrase refers to the *tašlíkh* ("throwing away the sins") ceremony and prayer, held and said near a body of water, on the first day of *Rosh Hashana*, the Jewish New Year festival.

d. *min ġēr il-šabatót wil-moʕadím* (lit.: "without Saturdays and religious festivals"); the prepositions and the definite article are in CEA, and the two nouns are in Hebrew. This is a humorous, also somewhat sarcastic, response to a person who claims to be younger than he or she is, meaning "you have not counted Saturdays and religious festivals", i.e. "you are older than you claim".

6. EJA neologisms: changing the original meaning

a. The word *rimmoním* (Heb; pl. of *rimmón*: "Pomegranate"), means a. "Pomegranates (fruit)". b. The ornaments (usually made of silver) placed on the two wooden handles with which the *séfer torá* is scrolled, because the traditional ornaments' shape resembles pomegranates. c. "a woman's breasts", in reference to their shape, often in a humorous tone, and with a smile. *Rimmoním,* with the first two meanings, but not the third, is used in many Jewish languages.

b. *Shabbat* (Saturday) is a sacred day in Judaism. Since this day occurs once a week, it is not to be wondered that it has had a strong impact on Jewish life and customs that also have given rise to special terminology connected to this day (see Rosenbaum 2016). Here I mention one common example only.

The special preparations for Shabbat and the great respect that it enjoys, are summed up in the EJA expression *kabód šabbát*

("honor, dignity, or respect" of Shabbat;"). This phrase also received another meaning, with which it is used euphemistically but with a humoristic tone, to denote having sexual relations on Saturday.

7. EJA neologisms: creating new words

Some words and expressions in EJA are neologisms created from either Hebrew or Arabic words or roots. The following are three examples:

a. The Jews of Egypt use two words to denote Saturday: Heb. *šabbát*; Arab. *sabt*. The Jews invented the neologism *sabbit*, a second-form verb derived from the Arabic term *sabt*, that means "spent the Shabbat with", as in *taʕāla sabbit ʕandina* ("come and spend the Shabbat with us").
b. Similarly, but in this case derived from a Hebrew word, the second-form verb *makkit* ("hit, beat"), is formed from the root m-k-t, otherwise non-existent in Hebrew or Arabic, derived from the Hebrew noun *makkót* ("blows, beatings"), plural of *makká*), whose Hebrew root is n-k-y. In EJA this verb has been commonly used in the imperative as an element of a secret language: *makkítu!* ("Hit him! Beat him up!"), especially as encouragement for a Jew who has a fight with a non-Jew.
c. The verb *kaššar* in EJA, derived from the Hebrew root k-š-r, and the word *kašér* ("kosher") has the special meaning "to clean and make kosher" (for Passover; also: render meat kosher).[17] Since in Egyptian Arabic there is an identical verb (*kaššar*), that means "to make a sour face", the verb *kaššar* has been, mainly before Passover, used in puns for amusement.

8. One old Hebrew word - between Cairo and Piedmont

Some Hebrew words in EJA appear in Jewish Holy Writ other than the Bible and the prayer book. A word of that sort is *maʕót*, that was very common in EJA, meaning "money".

[17] Cf. the verb *kasherare*, etc., in Judeo-Italian: Mayer Modena 2022, 187.

Originally, the word *maʕót*, pl. of *maʕá*, that appears in the Talmud, denoted "coins". In EJA it has become a frequent word used with the meaning of "money". This word, with the same meaning, but with a change in pronunciation, "mañòd", is described by Primo Levi as a common word in Judeo-Piedmontese, also in the humorous-sarcastic expression "saròd e senssa mañòd" (lit.: "troubles [from Heb. *tsarot*, צרות] and without money";[18] Levi explains that the reference here is to "fanciulle brutte e senza dote" ("ugly girls without dowry"), that is "girls who are both ugly and poor", in the jargon of Piedmontese matchmakers.[19]

9. Samples of Other lexical components: Aramaic and Romance components

9.1 Aramaic

Aramaic words have entered EJA, together with Hebrew. The following are two examples:

a. *ʕurubbá*, also *ʕarubbá* and *ʕerubbá*, is the common term for a festival eve.[20] In the construct state in EJA, the consonant *t* is added at the end of the word, e.g.: *ʕurubbát pésaḥ* (also: *bésaḥ*): "Eve of Passover".
b. *mamzertá* is the Aramaic fem. of *mamzér*, "illegitimate child", which is used in EJA (instead of Heb. *mamzerá*).

9.2 Romance languages around the Mediterranean

Three Romance languages spoken around the Mediterranean, French, Judeo-Spanish (also: Ladino or Judezmo), and Italian, are the third supplier of vocabulary to EJA, after (Egyptian) Arabic and Hebrew. The following are just a few examples (on a word borrowed from Judeo-Spanish see section 12a):

[18] Levi 2014, 9.
[19] On versions of *mañòd* in Judeo-Italian see Mayer Modena 2022, 220-221.
[20] Cf. Mayer Modena 2022, 258: *arubba*, etc.

a. Italian: *Zio* and *zia* ("uncle" and "aunt"), and *nonno* and *nonna* ("grandfather" and "grandmother"), are often used in EJA, interchangeably with their Arabic parallels.
b. French: *kominyón*, "the coming of age ceremony for Jewish girls at the age of 12" (parallel to "Bat Mitzva" in modern Hebrew); from the French term "communion" for the Christian Eucharist ceremony, known to many Jews who studied at French catholic schools. Quite a few Jewish girls went to study at *is-sirāt*, lit.: "The sisters; here: the nuns", a nickname in EJA for the catholic school for girls and its teachers. *Is-sirāt* is a mixed word created from the French word "soeur" ("sister", also "nun"), and the Arabic plural suffix, *āt*. Such terms entered EJA through Jewish girls, and also boys who were sent to study at the *frér* (in French: "Fréres"), "brothers"; here: "monks"), and thus helped in borrowing terms from French.

10. Just Arabic: An Egyptian Arabic name for a Jewish Holiday

Some Arabic words and phrases have no meaning outside the EJA context. For example, it was the custom of the Jews in Egypt to serve white geese at the festive meal on the festival of *Shavuʕót* (Pentecost; in EJA pronunciation: *šabuʕót*), giving rise to the phrase *ʕīd il-wizza* (lit.: "The feast of the [female] goose"), that became a popular common name for this festival, and was often heard in conversations among the Jews before and during the festival.

11. Compound words

A compound word is created when two or more words or stems are combined together into one word with a new meaning. EJA compound words were created by combining a Hebrew word with either another Hebrew word, or with an Arabic one.

a. The new year festival, celebrated according to the Jewish calendar on the first and second days of the month of Tishrei (realized *Tišrí* in EJA), is called in Hebrew *roš ha-šaná* (lit.: "Head of the year"). In EJA it became a compound word: *roššaná*, with elision of the definite article in the second word,

and the assimilation of the two consonants *š* into one geminated consonant.

b. *ṣererá*, also *ṣerará*, is a compound word apparently created from the Hebrew phrase *yetser haraʿ* ("evil inclination"), usually in phrases such as *da ḥayigīb li iṣ-ṣererá* ("he will cause me to lose my temper"; "he is driving me crazy" (lit.: "he will raise in me the evil inclination").

c. The compound word *muḫráʿ*, also in the version *meḫoráʿ*, meaning "stupid, idiot, intellectually disabled", is another type of compound word. It is apparently created from the Arabic word *muḫḫ* ("brain") and the Hebrew word *raʿ* ("bad"); most of my informants thought that literally this word meant "bad brain".

12. Distinct vocabulary used by the Karaites

Egyptian Karaite Jews use many distinct words and phrases of their own, many of which are connected to their unique traditions and way of life and unknown to the rabbinical Jews (see Rosenbaum, 2019). The following are two examples:

a. Rabbinical Jews use and often mention the word *kurátša* (borrowed from Judeo-Spanish). *Kurátša* is a bag for carrying the phylacteries, prayer shawl and prayer book. The Karaites, who do not put on phylacteries, carry a bag called *kīs ṭalīt*, "a bag for carrying the prayer shawl". Each group is unfamiliar with the term used by the other.

b. The Karaites eat foods and dishes that are not known outside their community. Since they do not use electricity or fire on Saturdays and religious festivals, they have dishes of their own, that are prepared beforehand and served cold, whose names are in most cases unknown outside the Karaite community. For example, *gamal maḥši* (lit.: "stuffed camel") is a whole chicken breast stuffed with rice and pieces of chicken liver, sometimes also with other kinds of meat, and seasoned with black pepper. The skin is sewn with a cord. The dish is eaten especially on Saturdays and holidays.

Until the mid-twentieth century, most of the goldsmiths in Egypt were Jews, and most of these were Karaites. The Karaite goldsmiths invented a secret language of their own, that contains

Hebrew words, and for centuries has been used by them. This secret language was transferred to the Christian and Muslim goldsmiths, who use it to this day, and some other non-Jewish merchants whose shops are near the goldsmiths'.[21]

13. Conclusion

This article, based on long and intensive work with many informants, native speakers of EJA, and also non-Jewish native speakers of CEA, mostly focuses on the influence of Hebrew vocabulary on spoken EJA, and shows in a nutshell how it functions and is embedded in speech, together with cultural elements and humor unique to the Jewish people. I also refer here to some similar features in Primo Levi's famous book *Il sistema periodico* ("The Periodic Table"), whose first chapter describes the distinct dialect of Piedmontese Jews, and in Mayer Modena's *Vena Hebraica* (2022) that describes the vocabulary used in various Judeo-Italian dialects.

My studies on EJA show quite clearly that the language spoken by Egyptian Jews, unlike the prevalent belief until the end of the twentieth century, was (and still is) a distinct Egyptian variety, different from that of non-Jews, mainly in the lexicon, and also in the domains of phonology, morphology and syntax. The examples quoted here from Levi and Mayer Modena's works show how different Jewish dialects, in this case Egyptian and Italian, share common linguistic and cultural features.

A distinct feature shared by Jewish language varieties is humor. Morag, in his discussion on the Hebrew vocabulary in Jewish languages, states that "Humor bubbles in the Hebrew lexicon",[22] and this is clearly reflected in some of the EJA examples quoted here, too.

Today there are practically no Jews in Egypt. Their dialect, however, is still spoken by a diminishing number of EJA native

[21] See Rosenbaum 2002a. Cf. Primo Levi's comments on the secret language of Jewish shop owners and employees that was later used by the non-Jews who replaced them (Levi 2014, 10).

[22] Morag 2001, 158.

speakers outside of Egypt, and a few second- and third-generation speakers who continue to speak EJA, but not at native speaker level.

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Notes on the Christian Arabic Dialect of Qarabāš (Diyarbakır)[1]

OTTO JASTROW

The now extinct Christian-Arabic dialect of Qarabāš near Diyarbakır is described on the basis of tape recordings made by the author in 1968. The article contains a grammatical sketch and some sample texts. Only in a few neighbouring Christian villages and among the Christians of Diyarbakır similar dialects were spoken; they are classified as a subgroup of Anatolian Arabic. Among them, only the dialect of Kaʿbīye was studied in detail (Jastrow 2022). Qarabāš shares the typical features of the group, in particular the pronominal suffix *-nu* 'his/him' and the indefinite article *faqad,* but has also a number of individual features which are described and contrasted with the Kaʿbīye dialect.

Keywords: Dialectology – Arabic – Christian dialects – Diyarbakır area – extinct varieties

Introduction

Qarabāš was one of several Arabic-speaking Christian villages in the vicinity of Diyarbakır which were wiped out in the Ottoman genocide of 1915. Although primarily targeting the Armenian people which indeed was all but exterminated on the territory of the present-day Turkish Republic, the genocide also aimed at the smaller, Arabic- or Aramaic-speaking Christian communities

[1] I am pleased to dedicate this contribution to my distinguished colleague, Riccardo Contini.

living in the same area, i.e., South-eastern Anatolia. It is hard to estimate how many different communities with their individual languages or dialects disappeared without leaving a trace. There were, however, survivors from various Christian places who could still be found in the sixties and seventies of the last century and, in dwindling numbers, even at a later date. It was a rare coincidence that in 1968 I met in Diyarbakır a few survivors of the above-mentioned Arabic-speaking villages. At that time I was doing fieldwork on the Arabic dialects of Mardin province and I had received a hint that in Diyarbakır, the capital of Diyarbakır province, there remained a few Arabic-speaking Christians. During the ensuing trip which lasted only four days (April 26 – 29, 1968) I met with several speakers from three different localities, namely the villages of Kaʿbīye and Qarabāš and the city of Diyarbakır. I left with more than five hours of tape recordings, 3 hours and 20 minutes from Kaʿbīye and an hour each from Qarabāš and Diyarbakır. Further material on Kaʿbīye, comprising a total of four hours, I was able to collect from a woman originating from Kaʿbīye who was living in Beirut.

In Jastrow 1978 I proposed a classification of the *qəltu* dialects of Anatolian Arabic into five groups, one of them the so-called Diyarbakır dialects. The accompanying text volume (Jastrow 1981) contains a chapter with selected texts from Kaʿbīye with a short grammatical introduction. Over the years, however, I became more and more impressed with the unique character of those dialects and, consequently, the importance of publishing the materials in their entirety. Thus, more than fifty years after collecting the original data, I published a monograph on the dialect of Kaʿbīye (Jastrow 2022). The volume also contains a sketch of the dialect of Diyarbakır city. The present article is intended to conclude my life-long study of the Diyarbakır dialects by providing a short description of the last of the three dialects, Qarabāš.

The article is exclusively based on an interview of one hour which I conducted with a couple from Qarabāš living in Diyarbakır. The husband was called Ḥanne, the name of his wife I did not record. Unfortunately – in retrospect – I asked too many

questions instead of giving the informants more space to speak freely. Thus only a few short passages of continuous speech could be retrieved from the recording; most of them are included in the article. Without my previous study of the other two dialects it would have been difficult to understand the speech of the informants, but taking Kaʿbīye as a basis for comparison, I was able to analyze the text and determine the characteristic features of the Qarabāš dialect which are described in the following.

The husband and wife whom I recorded spoke a fairly uniform dialect. They both tended to omit the definite article, a feature which has also been noted for Kaʿbīye. They had a tendency (more noticeable in the wife's speech) to leave out verbal object pronouns when the meaning was obvious. Influences of the Diyarbakır dialect seem to be minor. One item is the form *ayn* 'where', used rarely alongside Q *əndaḥ*. Like the Diyarbakır speakers I interviewed the husband and wife oscillate between *fīnu* and *fīyu* for 'there is'. Finally it should be noted that he speech of both husband and wife is interspersed with Turkish expressions.

Grammatical sketch

Being based on a limited text corpus the grammatical sketch is by necessity short and in some cases incomplete because the relevant forms are not attested. Sometimes comparison with the better attested dialect of Kaʿbīye can be helpful in interpreting the data.

1. Phonology

Some of the sound changes described are synchronic and exceptions occur in the text. Unless stated otherwise, data in cursive writing are phonemic.

1.1 Consonants

1.1.1 The Qarabāš dialect (henceforth Q) shares with Kaʿbīye (henceforth K) the historical shift of the interdentals **t̲, *d̲* and **ḏ̲* to the dental stops *t, d* and *ḍ*. Examples: *tnayn* 'two', *tlāte* 'three',

ktīr 'much', *ədnátək* 'your (m.) ear', *dəbbēnāye* 'fly', *ḍān* 'sheep (collective)', *abyaḍ* 'white'.

1.1.2 In K the opposition of the pharyngeals *ḥ* and *ʿ* is partially neutralized: In word final position and word internally before a voiceless consonant, *ʿ* is devoiced to *ḥ*. In Qarabāš this development is taken one step further as *ḥ* in turn can be voiced word internally between two vowels. Examples:

root	K	Q	
byʿ 'to sell'	*bāʿo* *bāḥ* *bəḥtu*	*bāʿu* *bāḥ* *bəḥtu*	'they sold' 'he sold' 'I sold'
rwḥ 'to go'	*ṛāḥo* *ṛəḥna*	***ṛāʿu*** ***ṛaʿna***	'they went' 'we went'
fṭḥ 'to open'	*yəftaḥ* *yəftáḥu*	*yəftaḥ* ***yəftáʿu***	'he opens' 'he opens it'

Table I: Neutralizalion of the opposition *ḥ:ʿ*

1.2 Vowels

Q and K have identical inventories of short and long vowels and have preserved the old diphtongs *ay* and *aw*.

1.2.1 The long vowels are *ī, ū, ē, ō, ā*. The vowels *ē* and *ō* appear mainly in loanwords, e.g. *ōḍa* 'room' (< turk. oda 'id.'). In rare cases the old diphthongs *ay* and *aw* have been monphthongized to *ē* and *ō,* e.g. *fōq* 'over, above', *ṣōb* 'direction; towards', *kēs* 'direction; towards'. The respective words are more or less the same in all Anatolian *qəltu* dialects.

1.2.2 The closed vowels *ī* and *ū* are frequently lowered to *ē* and *ō* when in contact with back or emphatic consonants, e.g. *dqēq* 'flour', *ṛōḥ* 'soul, life'.

1.2.3 Like in all Anatolian *qəltu* dialects, the main source of *ē* is the so-called imāla, i.e., the raising of **ā* to *ē* if the preceding or following syllable contained *ī* or *i*, e.g. *wēḥəd* 'one' (< **wāḥid* 'id.'), *rğēl* 'men' (< **riğāl* 'id.'), *ġərbēl* 'sieve' (< **ġirbāl* 'id.').

1.2.4 In word final unstressed position the long vowels *ī, ū, ē, ō, ā* are realized as short and therefore written without a length

mark. Vowels in word final position which are marked as long are stressed, e.g., *tīṛū* 'he will go'.

1.2.5 The short vowels are *ə* and *a*. In syllables closed by a pharyngal *ḥ* or *ʿ*, *ə* usually becomes *a,* e.g., *naḥləb* 'we milk', *ṛaḥtu* 'I went'. The change *ə* > *a* may also occur with *ḥ* or *ʿ* at the beginning of a syllable, e.g., *yḥaṭṭu* 'they put', *nəṭḥánu* 'we grind it'.

1.2.6 In K the vowel *ə* in word final unstressed syllables (i.e., closed by a single consonant) is realized as [e]. This feature is absent from Q, compare, e.g., K *ʿaneb* 'grapes', *awnek* 'there', *šəġlen* 'their work' with the Q equivalents *ʿanəb, hawnək*, *šəġlən*.

2. Pronouns and adverbs

2.1 Personal pronouns

The personal pronouns appear as independent forms and as copula in nominal sentences. Copula forms are shortened forms which are added enclitically to the predicate.

	independent	enclitic copula	
3.sg.m.	*hūwe*	*-we*	*əltábən yaʿni xafīf-we* 'the chaff is light'
3.sg.f.	*hīye*	*-ye*	*ǧaṛṛa gbīre-ye* 'the *ǧaṛṛa* (clay jar) is big'
3.pl.	*hənne*	*-ənne*	*sēktīn-ənne* 'they are standing'
2.sg.m.	*ənt*	*-ənt*	*áštōr-ənt?* 'how are you?'
1.sg.	*ana*	*-ana*	*ana rəǧǧāl-ana* 'I am a man'
1.pl.	*naʿne*		

Table II: Personal pronouns, independent and enclitic

2.2 Pronominal suffixes

Pronominal suffixes are suffixed to verbs, nouns and prepositions to indicate a verbal object, ownership or relationship. Verbal or nominal forms are always stressed on the syllable immediately preceding the suffix. If the syllable is of the type -v̌K the stress is marked with an accent, e.g., -v̌́K.

	after *K-*	After *v̄-*
3.sg.m.	*nəxsə́l-u* 'we wash it (m.)' *f-īd-u* 'in his hand'	*yəġbəzū-nu* 'they bake it (bread)' *nxallī-nu* 'we leave it' *kəğğəbnā-nu* 'we have brought him'
3.sg.f.	*nəxsə́l-a* 'we wash it (f.)' *yətláw-a* 'they fill it (f.)'	*ndarrī-ya* 'we winnow it (f.)' *yğībū-wa* 'they bring her'
3.pl.	*nvərr-ən* 'we throw them' *kəll-ən* 'all of them'	*ḍarbū-wən* 'they beat them' *yətlū-wən* 'they fill them'
2.sg.m.	*tadabbə́r-ək* 'I shall take care of you'	
2.pl.	*sayn-kən* 'your language'	
1.sg.	*əbn-i* 'my son' attached to a verb: *dabbrət-ni* 'She took care of me.'	*abū-y* 'my father' *mā qatalū-ni* 'they did not kill me.'
1.pl.	*ə́sʿm-na* 'our name' *tannōṛ-na* 'our oven'	*dabbrū-na* 'they took care of us'

Table III: Pronominal suffixes

2.3 Definite and indefinite article

A hallmark of the Diyarbakır group is the indefinite article *faqad* (in K *faqed*) 'a, one'. In Iraqi Arabic the cognate *fad* (< *fard* 'sole, single') is used in the same sense. Examples: *faqad maṛa* 'a woman', *faqad rəğğāl* 'a man'. Consequently the definite article *əl-* is often omitted with a definite noun, e.g., *hawa yāxəd təbən* 'the wind takes the chaff'.

2.4 Demonstrative pronouns

The demonstrative pronouns correspond to the K forms, however, initial *h* has been preserved.

close		remote	
sg.m.	*hāda*	*hāk*	*hāk əlwaxt* '(at) that time'

sg.f.	*hādi*	*hayk*	*hayk əllayle* ‘(in) that night’
pl.	*hawde*	*hawk*	

Table IV: Demonstrative pronouns

2.5 Interrogative pronouns

The interrogative pronouns are *məne* ‘who’ and *ayš* ‘what’.

2.6 Adverbs

hawne ~ hawn ‘here’, *hawnək* ‘there’
hāge ‘so, like this’
əssaʿni ‘now’, *ādi karra* ‘then, next’
əndaḥ ‘where?’, *mən əndaḥ* ‘from where?’
áqqadar ‘that much’, *ášqadar* ‘how much?’
áštōr ‘how?’

3. Verbs

3.1 Verb derivation

Anatolian *qəltu* dialects have nine verbal stems, the original IV. stem is not preserved. In K the nine stems are preserved as they are probably in Q; however, stems VI, IX and X are not attested.

The verbal stems of Q are illustrated in the following table. Perfect and imperfect of the same verb are not always attested, thus the lacking forms are supplanted by verbs of the same type. Likewise, a given verb form may be only attested with a verb modifier (3.4) or an attached prominal object, or indeed with both.

Verb derivation in Q closely follows the pattern of K. In both dialects all verb stems have identical inflectional bases for perfect and imperfect. In stems II to VI (the latter is not attested in Q) the imperfect base has been generalized, thus the last syllable of the perfect base appears with the vowel *ə*, e.g. *baddəl, *ybaddəl* ‘to change’, whereas in stems VII and VIII the perfect base has been generalized, thus the imperfect base is vocalized with *a*, e.g.,

yənḍábax ‘it is cooked’, *yəftáham* ‘he understands’. The following table lists the available verb forms illustrating verb derivation.

stem	root type	perfect	imperfect
Ia	strong verb	*qatalū-na* ‘they killed us’	*nəsláq-u* ‘we boil it (m.)’ *nəṭḥán-u* ‘we grind it’
	mediae geminatae	*ḥaṭṭaytu* ‘I put’	*nḥaṭṭ-u* ‘we put it (m.)’ *nləmm* ‘we gather’
	mediae infirmae	*qām* ‘he got up’ *ṣār* ‘he became’	*yqūmu* ‘they get up’ *yṣīr* ‘he becomes’
	tertiae infirmae	*bada* ‘he began’ *badu* ‘they began’	*nətli* ‘we fill’ *yəbqa* ‘he stays, remains’
Ib	strong verb	*həṛəb* ‘he fled’ *bəzaḥ* ‘he was afraid’	*yəhṛəb* ‘he flees’ *yəbzaḥ* ‘he is afraid’
II	strong verb	*baddəlna* ‘we changed’	*yṣarṛə́d-a* ‘he sieves it (f.)’ *nbazzáʿ-u* ‘we scare him’
	tertiae infirmae	*xallu* ‘they left, let’	*nxallī-nu* ‘we let it, leave it’ *ndarri* ‘we winnow’
4-rad.	strong	*tbarbəzna* ‘we were dissipated’	*yġarbəlūnu* ‘they sieve it’
III	strong verb		*yṭēlʿū-nu* ‘they take him out’ *yṭēlʿū-wa* ‘they take her out’
V	strong verb	*tʿalləmtu* ‘I learned’ *ğğawwəzna* ‘we got married’	*kənnətʿalləm* ‘we used to learn’
VI		*not attested*	
VII	strong verb	*nsalaq* ‘it (m.) was boiled’	*yənḍábax* ‘it (m.) is cooked’ *yənkásaṛ* ‘it is broken’
	mediae geminatae		*yəllammu* ‘they gather’
	tertiae infirmae		*yənqáli* ‘it is roasted’
VIII	strong verb		*yəftáham* ‘he understands’ *yəxtámaṛ* ‘it (m.) ferments’
IX		*not attested*	
X		*not attested*	

Table V: Verb derivation

3.2 Irregular verbs

	Perfect	+ pron. suffixes	imperfect	+ pron. suffixes
sawa	*sawa* 'he made' *sayna* 'we made'	*sawōna* 'they made us'	*ysawi~ysay* 'he makes' *nsay* 'we make' *ysawu ~ ysō* 'they make'	*ysawīyu* 'he makes him' *nsáyən* 'we make them' *ysawōnu~ysōnu* 'they make him' *ysawáwa~ysūwa* 'they make her'
wadda		*waddōna* 'they took us away'	*yaddu* 'they take away' *naddi* 'we take away'	*yaddáwa~yaddūwa* 'they take her away' *kənnadīyu* 'we used to take it (m.) away'
ṛāḥ	*ṛāḥ* 'he went'		*yṛū* 'he goes', *tīṛū* 'he will go'	
ǧā	*ǧā* 'he came' *ǧaw~ǧō* 'they came' *ǧīt* 'she came' *ǧītu* 'I came'		*yəǧi* 'he comes' *kənyáǧi* 'he used to come' *kəntáǧi* 'she used to come'	

Table VI: Irregular verbs

3.3 Verb inflection

Verb inflection in Q closely follows the pattern of K, except for the plural forms 3.pl. perfect and 2.pl. and 3.pl. imperfect which are discussed separately. The remaining forms for Q are attested as follows:

	perfect		imperfect	
person	affix		affix	
3.sg.m.	*-o*	*dəxəl* 'he entered'	*yə-, ya-, y-* …*-o*	*yədxəl* 'he enters' *yaḥləb* 'he milks' *yǧīb* 'he brings'
3.sg.f.	*-ət, -t*	*dəxlət* 'she entered'	*tə-, ta-, t-* …*-o*	*təbqa* 'she stays' *tṣīr* 'she becomes'

		kənbáqət 'she had stayed' *ǧīt* 'she came'		
2.sg.m.	*-t*	*aṛayt* 'did you see?' *qatalt-u* 'you (m.) killed him'	*tə-, ta-, t-…-o*	*ənt ʾtqūl* 'you (m.) say'
2.sg.f.			*tə-, ta-, t-…-i*	*táʿǧəni* 'you knead'
1.sg.	*-tu*	*xələṣtu* 'I got away' *qəmtu* 'I got up'	*a-…-o*	*anām* 'I sleep' *aqṛi* 'I read'
1.pl.	*-na*	*həṛəbna* 'we fled'	*nə-, na-, n-…-o*	*nətli* 'we fill' *naḥləb* 'we milk' *nǧīb* 'we bring'

Table VII: Verb inflection without 2. and 3. person plural

The plural forms 3.pl. perfect and 2.pl. and 3.pl. imperfect distinguish between strong verbs and final week verbs. If no pronominal suffix is added, all forms, both in perfect and imperfect, end in *-u*. Before pronominal suffixes strong verbs end in *-ū-*, final week verbs end in *-ō-* before suffixes with an initial consonant, in *-aw-*, more rarely in *-ū-*, before suffixes with an initial vowel. This is illustrated in the following table (only examples for the 3.pl. are given). For additional examples see table VI, under *sawa* and *wadda*. In monosyllabic verb forms the ending *-ō ~ -aw* occurs without pronominal suffix, see *sawa* and *ǧā* in table VI.

	root type	simple verb form	+ pronominal suffix
perfect/ imperfect	strong	*qatalu* 'they killed' *yḥattu* 'they put'	*qatalū-na* 'they killed us' *yḥaṭṭū-nu* 'they put him'
	tert. infirmae	*xallu* 'they let, left' *yətlu* 'they fill'	*xallō-nu* 'they let, left him' *yətlū-wa* 'they fill it (f.)' *ydarráw-a* 'they winnow it (f.)'

Table VIII: Verb inflection, 3. person plural, in Qarabāš

The Q forms differ from the respective K forms in the following points: In K likewise all forms have identical endings when no pronominal suffix is added. The endings appear in a shorter variant *-o* and a longer variant *-ōn* (unstressed) which are used without a difference in meaning. Before a pronominal suffix strong verbs have the ending *-ū-*, final weak verbs the ending *-aw-*. This is illustrated in the following table.

In monosyllabic verb forms the ending *-ō ~ -aw* also occurs without pronominal suffix, see *sawa* and *ǧā* in table VI.

Kaʿbīye			
	root type	simple verb form	+ pronominal suffix
perfect	strong	*ḍarbo ~ ḍárbōn* 'they beat'	*ḍarbū-nu* 'they beat him'
	tert. infirmae	*waddo ~ wáddōn* 'they took away'	*waddaw-nu* 'they took him away'
imperfect	strong	*yáḍrəbo ~ yáḍrəbōn* 'they beat'	*yəḍrəbū-nu* 'they beat him'
	tert. infirmae	*ywaddo ~ ywáddōn* 'they take away'	*ywaddaw-nu* 'they take him away'

Table IX: Verb inflection, 3. person plural, in Kaʿbīye

3.4 Verb modifiers

3.4.1 The past modifier kən-

kən- is prefixed to the imperfect to express repeated or customary action in the past, e.g., *yəǧi* 'he comes' → *kənyáǧi* 'he used to come', *nsawi* 'we make' → *kənᵊnsáwi* 'we used to make'. The same prefix is used in Diyarbakır whereas Kaʿbīye has *kā-*, e.g., *kāyqūlo* 'they used to say'.[2]

[2] The prefixes are derived from *kān* 'he/it was' which was grammaticalized as a past marker. In Mardin Arabic *kān* is still an independent form, e.g. *kān yəǧi* 'he used to come', in the remaining Anatolian dialects it has mostly been reduced to a prefix *kā- ~ ka-*, e.g., Āzəx *kāyáǧi* 'he used to come', cf. Jastrow 1978, 304-305.

When preceded by *kən-* the imperfect prefix *y-* yields *ī*, e.g., **kən-yqūl* → *kənīqūl* 'he used to say', **kən-ysawīya* → *kənīsawīya* 'he used to make it'.

The change does not occur when *yə-* stands in a closed syllable, e.g. *kənyəḍṛə́ba* 'he used to hit it (f.)'

When prefixed to the perfect, *kən-* expresses a past action whose consequences persist at the time of the utterance, e.g., *ʿallqu* → *kənʿallqu* 'they have attached', *ğābu* → *kən-ğābu ~ kəğğābu* 'they have brought'.

Prefixed *kən-* is also used to express the past of *fīnu ~ fīyu* 'there is', e.g., *kənfīnu ~ kənfīyu* 'there was'.

3.4.2 The future modifier tə-

tə-[3] is prefixed to the imperfect to express future action, e.g., *nəqtə́lu* → *tənəqtə́lu* 'we shall kill him', *nnadīyu* → *tənnadīyu* 'we shall take him along'.

With the inflectional prefix *y-, yə-*, the modifier *tə-* yields *tī*, e.g., *ynām* → *tīnām* 'he will sleep', *yəğī* → *tīğī* 'he will come', *yəntamm* → *tīntamm* 'it will end'. An analogous formation is *yāxdu* → *tīyāxdu* 'they will take'.

Preceding the 1.sg. the prefix is reduced to *t-*, e.g., *anām* → *tanām* 'I shall sleep', *aṛū* → *taṛū* 'I shall go'.

Texts

The following passages were gleaned from the recordings. (H) and (W) indicate whether the husband or the wife is speaking. My questions are marked with (OJ) and given in English translation. The subjects treated sometimes overlap, and the description may be incoherent or repetitive.

Hesitation or incomplete sentences are marked by …, (…) indicates skipping some text. Uncertain words are followed by (?). The texts contain a number of ad hoc loans from Turkish, which

[3] The prefix is probably derived from *ḥattā* 'in order to'. In Mardin it has the form *ta-*, e.g., *taɣə́ğī* "he will come', cf. Jastrow1978, 302-303.

are marked as ^{T}…^{T}. For the most part, they represent standard Turkish and have not been commented upon. Only words which have changed in pronunciation and/or meaning are explained in a footnote. The texts are numbered starting with 4 in order to keep them distinct from the preceding grammatical section.

4.1 Surviving the massacres

4.1.1 (H) *waqt əssafarballək,*[4] *kənna naʿne, zāṭán, kənfīna, tlaṭṭaʿš sane, yaʿni arbaṭaʿš sane, hāge ʿamᵊrna kənfīyu.*

At the time of the massacres we were,[5] anyhow, we were thirteen, fourteen years old, that was our age.

4.1.2 *w hāda safarballək qām ʿalayna, w ḍarabūna w qatalūna, w mō-ṛəf ayš sawōna w naʿne kəll wēḥəd mōḍaʿ tbarbəzna.*

The massacres came upon us, they (sc. the Muslims) beat us and killed us, and I don't know what they did to us. We were dispersed, each one to a (different) place.

4.1.3 *w raʿna ʿand ġayri ḍyāḥ, waddōna, dabbrūna. baqayna laʿandən, w xadamnālən, hawn w hawnək, īla qlayl əddənye hāge qmāye* ^{T}*sağlam*^{T} *(?) ṣārət, haṛəbna ğīna dxəlna fə-lwalāye.*[6]

We went to other villages, they took us there and took care of us. We stayed with them and worked for them, here and there, until the world became a bit safer (?), then we ran away and came into the city.

4.1.4 *ğīna hawne fə-lwalāye* ^{T}*işte*^{T} ^{T}*tek tük*^{T} *nəṣrāni kənfīyu lḥaqna ʿənd baʿḍna. məne fə-ḍḍyāh kənfīyu kallu haṛəb ğā hawne fə-lwalāye.*

We came here to the city, there were a few individual Christians, and we joined each other. Whoever had been in the villages, all of them ran away and came here to the city.

4.1.5 *w mən hawne ādi karra badu yaẓwāš yawāš,*[7] *yənğaṛṛu kəll wēḥəd ṣōb, xallōna hōn, naʿne baqayna l-hawne* ^{T}*işte*^{T}*, yaʿni ahᵊlna nēs lē*

[4] *safarballək* < turk. *seferberlik* 'mobilization' (at the beginning of WWI); used to refer to the 1915 genocide of the Christians of South-east Anatolia.

[5] Here and in the following the speaker sometimes refers to himself in the plural.

[6] The term *əlwalāye* 'the city' is used for Diyarbakır.

[7] < Turk. yavaş yavaş 'slowly'.

kənfīyu hawn ṛāʿu l-Qāmišli, rāʿu lᵊḤsəčča ṛāʿu mō-ṛəf ayn, l-kəll mōḍaʿ dawwru.

From here they slowly started to move away, each one in a different direction, and they left us here. So we stayed here, but our people, the people who were here, went to Qāmišli, to Ḥsəčča (i.e., Ḥasake), they went I don't know where, they took turns everywhere.

4.1.6 *sōṇa*[8] *baqayna hawne šī ṣərna gəbəṛna, lə-qmāye qəmna ğğawwəzna, ṣərna ṣāʿbīn wlād, ṣāʿbīn šī, yaʿni wēḥəd xəlaṣna, ē māšalla əssaʿni ṣərna* [T]*tam*[T] *kəfle, ktīr ṣərna, ē.*

Afterwards I (lit. we) stayed here, I became something, I grew up, after a while I got married, I had children and so on. In other words I escaped as a single person, but now we have become a complete family, we have become many.

4.1.7 *(OJ: How exactly did you escape the massacres?) (H) naʿne həṛəbna dxəlna faqad ḍayʿa. faqad maṛa kənfīnu āge, kərdīye. qāl taʿāl kī tadabbárək. ana raḥtu laʿanda hīye qāmət dabbrətni, w xəlaṣtu, ṣārət sabab hīye, yaʿni mā qatalūni.*

(OJ: How exactly did you escape the massacres?) (H) I ran away and went to a village. There was a woman, a Kurdish woman. She sad: Come, I shall take care of you. I went to her and she took care of me. I was saved, she was the reason that they did not kill me.

4.1.8 *gəbəṛtu xəlaṣtu baqaytu ʿənda īla kī, lə-qmāye* [T]*tamām*[T] *ṣərtu, w qəmtu mən ʿənda xallaytu ğītu lwalāye.*

I grew up, I was saved. I stayed with her until I was coming of age, then I left her and came to the city.

4.2. Wheat and wheat products

4.2.1 *(H) ḥənṭa, ndəqqa, w nğīb, yaʿni nkawwáma, šī nsawīya, hawa lağğā* [T]*ise*[T]*, hawa, ğā* [T]*ise*[T]*, maḥ šī, nvərra. ndarrīya. ḥənṭa ṣōb šī tṣīr, w təbən, hawa yāxəd təbən hāk-ste yəbqa ʿənd hawne. (…)*

The wheat, we thresh it, then we make it into a heap. When the wind comes, the wind, when it comes, we throw it up with something, we winnow it. The wheat goes in one direction, and

[8] < Turk. sonra 'afterwards, then'.

the chaff … the wind takes the chaff, while (the wheat) stays here. (…)

4.2.2 *īla mən baʿḍa nṣaffīya … əltábən yaʿni xafīf-we, hawa yāxəd təbən yaʿzálu, ḥanṭa təbqa atāra… b-āk [T]çeşit[T] naʿzála mən baʿḍa. (…)*

Until we separate them from each other. The chaff is light, so the wind takes the chaff and separates it while the wheat stays in its place. In this way we se separate them from each other. (…)

4.2.3 *(W) əlḥanṭa yaddu yəzraʿūwa abūy, ysūqūwa yəzraʿūwa. ʾṭṣīr īla áqqadar, sōṇa yqūmu yaḥṣədūwa. yaḥṣədūwa, ydarráwa, w yğībūwa ādi karra yṭēlʿūwa ḥanṭa, yaddūwa ṛṛəhā, mə-ṛṛəḥā yğību yáʿğənu xbayz.*

The wheat, they take it and sow it, my dear, they plough it under and sow it. It grows until this high, then they mow it. They mow it, winnow it and bring it, they take out the wheat. They take it to the mill, and from the mill they bring it and knead bread.

4.2.4 *yáʿğənu xbayz ādi karra yqūmu yánğəṛu ttannōṛ, yəġbəzūnu fə-tannōṛ. yəġbəzūnu fə-tannōṛ, ādi karra tṣīr kəlla xbayzāt hama hāge, yğību yāklu abūy. ḍayʿāwīye šəġlən hāda kān. (…)*

They knead the bread, then they heat the oven, they bake (the bread) in the oven. They bake it in the oven and it becomes loaves like this, they bring it (home) and eat it, my dear. That was the work of the village people. (…)

4.2.5 *ē, yġarbəlūwa w ādi karra yqūmu yḥaṭṭu ṃayye w yaʿğənūnu. yáʿğənu w karra yqūmu yánğəṛu ttannōṛ, tannōṛən yáʿğənu, ysōnu āge ṭəpsəkāt, w karra yəftaʿūnu, w yəlzəqūnu fə-ttannōṛ, yənḍábax, w yğību yāklu.*

Well, they sieve (the flour) and then they put some water and knead it (sc. the dough). They knead it and then they heat the oven. They make (the dough) into balls, then they roll it out (lit. open it) and stick it (on the walls of) the oven. It gets baked, and they bring it and eat it.

4.2.6 *(OJ: How often would they bake bread?) sabbe karrtayn, agar ktīr kənṣərna, tlətt karrāt yáxbəzu, aṛbaḥ karrāt yáxbəzu əbni, ē, agar mā yṣīrlən hanne čūt[9] bass yṣīru, sabbe karra tīʿğənu, yəkfālən.*

(OJ: How often would they bake bread?) Two times a week. If we were many, they would bake three times, they would bake four

[9] čūt 'two' < Turk. çift 'pair'.

times, my son. If they do not have … if they are just two people, they bake once a week, that is enough for them.

4.2.7 *ē ᵀmisalᵀ naʿne ktīr ṣərna, əllūlād, ləgbīr ləzġayyər, kállətən yāklu xbayz, sabbe tlətt ṭərq naʿğən, tlətt ṭərq aṛbaḥ ṭərq táʿğəni. (…) ᵀyoksaᵀ mən-əndaḥ yāklu. əssaʿni mā nākəl, kəfle mā nṣīr, čūt bass ᵊnṣīr ayš nākəl. mā nākəl šī.*

For instance, (when) we were many, the children, big and small, they all eat bread, we would bake three times a week, you (f.) would make the dough three times, four times a week. Otherwise, from where would they eat? Now we don't eat (much), we are not a family, only two people, what shall we eat? We don't eat anything.

4.3 Milk and cheese[10]

4.3.1 *(OJ: What did you make from the milk?) (H) mən ḥalīb, ᵀefendimᵀ, mən ḥalīb ayš kənᵊnsáwi? mən ḥalīb, ğəbən kənᵊnsáwi, mən ḥalīb labne kənᵊnsáwi, mən ḥalīb hama ayš lē tqūl, samne kənyəṭlaʿ, kəll šī mən ḥalīb kənyáğiᵀişteᵀ. mən šī, mən baqaṛ kənyáğī, mən ḍān kənyáğī w mən baqaṛ kənyáğī.*

(OJ: What did you make from the milk?) (H) From the milk, sir, what did we make from the milk? From the milk we would make cheese, from the milk we would make yoghurt, from the milk, whatever you say … butter would be made. Everything came from the milk. (The milk itself) came from cows, it came from sheep and it came from cows.

4.3.2 *(OJ: How did you make cheese?) (W) ḥalīb, kənyaḥləbūwa, kənīğību yḥaṭṭūnu fə-lmarğal, ṛawbe fīnu, (H) yaʿni darmān kənfīnu. (W) darmān kənfīnu, hāk darmān kənībəzzūnu qlayl ʿaláyu yətlōnu f-āk əlḥalīb, qlayl kənīsakktu, kənītlu fə-ttōrbāyāt. kənīṣīr ğəbən. (H) kənyəsmək. (W) kənyəsmək, kənīṣīr ğəbne.*

(OJ: How did you make cheese?) (W) The milk … they would milk (the cow), they would bring (the milk) and put it in a kettle.

[10] A somewhat confused description which does not clearly distinguish between yoghurt and cheese. A more detailed description from Kaʿbīye is found in Jastrow 2022, 223-224.

There is yeast, (H) there was a substance, (W) there was a substance, that substance, they would scatter a small quantity over (the milk), put it in the milk. They would leave (the milk) alone for a while and fill it in bags. It would become cheese. (H) It turned solid. (W) It turned solid, it became cheese.

4.4 Story: A courageous man spends the night in a grave (told by H)

4.4.1 … *yqūmu šī ysawōnu yqūlu tənnaddīyu əllayle nḥaṭṭu fə-ttərbe … ʿaši-we mō yəlḥaqu tīyaddu yḥaṭṭūnu fə-ttərbe. yqūlu faqad rəǧǧāl šī bʿatu, tīṛū ynām fīya. əllayle tərbe fārġa lā təbqa.*

… They prepare him (sc. the deceased person), they say: We'll take him tonight and put him in the grave. … But it is (already) evening, they would not make it in time to put him in the grave. They say: Send some man to go and lie in (the grave). Tonight the grave should not remain empty.

4.4.2 *ē yqūlu mane rəǧǧal-we, mane rəǧǧāl-we, əllayle mā yəbzaḥ tīṛū ynām fīya? baqa wēḥəd yqūl, yāhu ana taṛū anām fīya ayš fīnu? ana rəǧǧāl-ana w ana tanām fīya. yqūmu, yqūlu hāda tīṛū llayle tīnām fīya.*

They say: Who is a (real) man, who is a man who is not afraid to go tonight and sleep in it? Somebody says: Hey, I shall go and sleep in it, what is (the problem)? I am a man and I shall sleep in it. So they say: This one is going to sleep in it tonight.

4.4.3 *ādi karra hāge yəllammu, faqad bayt, oḍāwīye yḥaṭṭu yáqʿadu, rǧēl. yqūlu, kəm wēḥəd yqūlu yāhu hāda agar rəǧǧāl-we manna(?) áqqadar, kənīqūl ana rəǧǧāl-ana, əllayle nqūm nbazzáʿu hāda yəbzaʿ mō yəbzaḥ. təṛṛū taǧrīb nsayu āda rəǧǧāl-we mō rəǧǧāl-we.*

Then (the men) gather, in some house, they sit down for a meeting, the men. Some of them say: If he is really such a (fearless) man, (since) he said: I am a man, then let us get up tonight and frighten him (and see) whether he is afraid or not. We shall go and test him whether he is a (real) man or not.

4.4.4 *yqūmu tnayn yqūlu naʿne təṛṛū nəqšaʿ ayš-šəkəl rəǧǧāl-we hāda. yṛūʿu taǧrīb ysawōnu, yʿayynu kī rəǧǧāl fə-ttərbe nayyəm-we, kəṭṭāl, ḥāšid-we (?), ǧəġāṛátu qalyūnu fə-ǧəmbu-we, yəšṛəb qalyūn, w ʿūdátu-ste fə-ǧəmbu-ye.*

Two of them get up and say: We shall go and see what kind of a man he is. They go to test him. They see that the man is lying in the grave, he has stretched himself out, he is awake (?), his cigarette, his pipe is next to him, he is smoking pipe, and his stick is also placed next to him.

4.4.5 *tnayn yə́skətu*[11] *ʿaṛ-ṛāsu, b-əlʿarabi yqūlu inna rabbuka, hūwe-ste, hāk rəğğāl-ste aṣlu zāza-we, yʿalli ṛāsu mən taḥt hāge ysay yqūl xxx,*[12] *ē hāk yəqšáʿ kī tnayn ʿala ṛāsu sēktīn-ənne, w hawde … ğərğərāt (?)*[13] *mā fīnu?*

The two position themselves at his head and say in Arabic *inna rabbuka*[14]. The man – he is of Zaza origin – lifts his head from below and and says xxx (in Zaza). Well, he sees that two people are standing at his head, and they … isn't there something like rattles (?).

4.4.6 *kəğğābu kənʿallqu fə-ṛōḥən ğərğərāt yqūlu, ysawu xəš xəš xəš ysawi, yqūl inna rabbuka hūwe* ^{T}*gene*^{T} *yqūl xxx (in Zaza), yaʿni yqūl mayyət ana mā-na. yqūl mayyət əllayle mā kəğğabnānu, yqūl baʿd fə-lbayt-we. (…) mā kəğğəbnānu baʿd.*

They have brought rattles, which they have attached to themselves, they say, they make *xəš xəš xəš*. They say *inna rabbuka* and he again says xxx (in Zaza), meaning: I am not the deceased. He says: We did not bring the deceased tonight, he is still in the house. We did not yet bring him.

4.4.7 *yqūl mō ana-na əlmayyət. hūwe yəftáham kī hawde kəğğō tīyāxdu ṛōḥu. kaṛtləx-ste yqūllu innaka rabbuka, xəš xəš xəš, rəğğāl yəṭharsən (?) mən taḥt, yqūl ana aqūllək kī innaka rabbuka ana aqūllək kī əlmayyət fə-bayt muxtār-we, ənt ʾtqūl* ^{T}*gene*^{T} *innaka rabbuka.*

[11] The verb seems to have the unusual meaning of 'standing without moving'. This is corroborated by the II. stem in *qlayl kənīsakktu* 'they would leave (it) alone for a while' (4.3.2).

[12] *xxx* stands for a few words in the (West-Iranian) Zaza language which could not be identified.

[13] The word is not clearly audible, but *ğərğərāt* < Turkish cırcır 'rattle' would fit the context.

[14] This formula which later also appears as *innaka rabbuka,* is intended as the beginning of a solemn announcement, implying that the men have come to take his soul, but the speakers lack familiarity with Classical Arabic.

He says: It's not me, the deceased. He understands that they have come to take his soul. Again they say to him: *innaka rabbuka, xəš xəš xəš.* The man is fidgeting(?) from below: I am telling you, *innaka rabbuka*, I am telling you that the deceased is in the mukhtar's house, and you are telling me again: *innaka rabbuka!*

4.4.8 *hama hāk ynəṭṭ (?) mən taḥt, [T]ište[T] hādi yvərra, hāge yəḍṛába hawn …hāk [T]tepelenmis[T] yṣīr [T]derhal[T] yəqaʿ fə-lʾarḍ, w hāk əllāx yəhṛəb. hāk əllāx yəhṛəb hāge, áštōr la-yəqaḥ, yəqaḥ fə-ttərbe, hāda hama yqūm mə-ttərbe yaʿdi xalf əllāx.*

At once he jumps (?) out from below, he throws it (the stick), he hits (the man) like this, he dies and at once drops to the ground, while the other one runs away. The other one runs away and (the hit man), in the way he drops, he falls into the grave. He (i.e., the courageous man) gets out of the grave and runs after the other.

4.4.9 *hāda yəqaḥ fə-ttərbe, w hāk yqūm yaʿdi xalfu. yaʿdi xalfu yaddi ydēxálu ḍḍayʿa. hāda ayš tīṛū yədxəl, kama baytna, lərğēl qāʿdīn-ənne, w hūwe yədxəl əlbayt, ğawwa, yəhṛəb yhawwər yqūl qūmu yāhu, yqūl hawde tīyāxdu ṛōḥāt, yqūl tnayn mənnən ğaw, wēḥəd qataltūnu, w wēḥəd baqa.*

That one falls into the grave and he runs after (the second man). He runs after him and chases him into the village. Where will he enter? In (a place) like our house. The men are sitting there, and he enters the house. He comes running and calling out: Get up, these people want to take the souls. Two of them came, I killed one, and one is still around.

4.4.10 *yāhu, rğēl yqūlu yāhu flān kass kān [T]ište[T] qataltu. hani yqūl hāk ərrəğğāl ayš-šəġlu tīği w tağrībāt ysaynu, ē qataltūnu, w hāk əllāx-ste agar dəxəl hawne hāk-ste tənəqtálu. mən əddənye mawt tīntamm, mā tībqa nēs tīğō yāxdu ṛōḥna.*

Good God, the men say, that was So-and-so, and you have killed him. Well, he said, what was the bussiness of that man to come and make a test … I killed him, and if the other one comes in here, I shall kill him as well. Death will disappear from the world, there won't be any people left to come and take our souls.

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I Doni della Zucca. *A Festivity of Fresh Cucurbits in the Arabic Tradition*

LUCIA RAGGETTI

Dirò bene perché sono inalberato con questa Zucca […]
Piaccia alla Sorte che la mia Zucca mandi fuori il suo seme il qual sia dilettevole […]
Io ve la do volentieri, allegramente […]
perché s'io veggo che questa vi gusti, ve ne darò dell'altre corpacciate. & state sani.
Anton Francesco Doni, *La Zucca del Doni* (1551)

This paper explores the rich cultural, symbolic, and technical dimensions of cucurbits – gourds, melons, and cucumbers – through a cross-cultural lens, focusing particularly on Arabic scientific and magical traditions. While these fruits have long held significance in Mediterranean antiquity and were later embraced in early modern European literature (notably by Anton Francesco Doni), their elusive classification and diverse nomenclature have complicated botanical and historical identification.

Drawing on sources ranging from Galen's humoral medicine to Arabic technical manuscripts, the study examines cucurbits not merely as food or medicinal plants, but as dynamic agents capable of transformation, absorption, and adaptation. Galenic theory describes them as neutral, absorbing dominant bodily qualities. Arabic sources go further: 11th-century manuals detail methods for shaping cucurbits using molds, for inducing cross-species traits through altered germination, and even for manipulating cognitive faculties via occult plantings – melons grown in skulls to influence the consumer's intellect or folly. Among the most remarkable sources is the *Treasure of Alexander*, a compendium linking cucurbit transformation to Hermetic magic and the doctrine of occult properties. Such practices reveal a hybrid conception of vegetal life, merging empirical agronomy with speculative cosmology and natural philosophy.

Cucurbits thus serve as a case study in the entangled histories of science, medicine, and magic across cultures.

Keywords: pre-modern botany – Galenic medicine – Arabic technical literature – hermetic tradition – botanical symbolism.

Anton Francesco Doni (1513–1574) had a particular affinity for horticultural allegories[1] and chose the cucurbit as a symbol for a rich collection of witty literary discussions on various topics.[2] By his time, new species of cucurbits had begun arriving from the New World[3] but melons, gourds, and cucumbers were already well known and utilized in Mediterranean antiquity and premodern times. These plants were perceived as related long before the botanical definition of the *Cucurbitaceae* family.[4] The nomenclature of cucurbits is both abundant and elusive in ancient and modern languages, a complexity that becomes even more pronounced through a comparative approach. Their cultural and symbolic significance, spanning the globe, is no less intricate.[5]

While one might grasp the type of fruit a text refers to, it is far more challenging – if not impossible – to determine the material reality behind the description in order to propose a precise identification.[6] Nevertheless, even if cucurbits resist attempts to identification, technical sources offer the potential to convey a clearer understanding of the distinctive characteristics of these plants and their pharmacological applications. In this context, the various cucurbits emerge as closely related and endowed with the unique quality of adapting their nature to harmonize with the dominant qualities of the body that absorbs them. Galen explains this adaptability as a result of the cucurbit's intermediate position

[1] As it was customary among early modern scholars, in his studying years in Piacenza, Anton Francesco Doni entered the *Accademia Ortolana*, with the nickname of *Semenza*. For the Piacenza Academy, see Braghi 2011.

[2] See Doni 1565.

[3] See Paris et al. 2006.

[4] See Janick 2007; see also Bedevian 1994.

[5] See Norrman and Haarberg 1980.

[6] In Arabic, the most common names for cucurbits are *ḫiyār* (cucumber), *qiṯā* or *qiṯāʾ* (snake cucumber, bottle gourd), *qaraʿ* (gourd), *biṭṭīḫ* or *baṭṭīḫ* (melon).

within the framework of primary elemental qualities, situated midway between all extremes.[7]

> Since the large gourd is like this, it is understandable that it does not lend itself to many methods of preparation, because it is set midway between all extremes, and hence has the potential of being brought equally and easily to these extremes. [...]
> The large gourd contains a juice that is without quality as far as the senses are concerned. It distributes all the juice it has as nourishment to the whole body. So, by the same token, whenever it is served with anything that has a strong power, this is readily absorbed: for example, if it is eaten with mustard, it is made bitter.

Galen, however, asserts that the transformation of a quality into its opposite occurs gradually and not all at once.[8]

> They are mixed in two ways: either they are not uniform in their substances and have various qualities in their parts; [11.671 K] or they are simple and uniform, and come to be so through changing greatly differing things into each other. For honey does not suddenly become bitter, but when either boiled considerably or aged, changes slowly to bitterness when subjected to such processes. Neither do those fruits that end up sweet from earlier bitterness, such as some of the cucumbers and melons, cast off all at once their original quality. For only slowly do changes befall all things that are altered by nature, and particularly in cases when the alteration and transformation result in very different or even opposing qualities. [4.15, 11.670–71 K]

If sifted for cucurbit-related references, Arabic technical literature yields a bountiful harvest. However, on the occasion of this Festivity, only a few fresh cucurbits have been selected to be offered as *primitiae*. These come from various sources that can be grouped under the aegis of natural properties and their applications.

The 11th-century master of ceremonies at the Fatimid court, al-Iskandarī, included in his manual for polite entertainment, *The Book of the Babylonian Stratagems* (*Kitāb al-ḥiyal al-bābiliyya*), a section

[7] See Grant 2000, 112.
[8] See Wilkins 2021, 486.

devoted to the special effects one might achieve using plants and fruits.[9] Among these wonders for the garden is a procedure that connects different cucurbits through a process of transformative germination:[10]

> When you take cucumber seeds, macerate them in old wine along with saffron threads, a melon will emerge; when you saw in the earth some melon seeds and irrigate them with gourd juice, a cucumber will germinate.

Regardless of its outcome, if there was a theoretical basis for this curious procedural knowledge, it remains implicit. However, it is possible to speculate that it echoes an idea derived from empirical observation of cross-pollination between plants that were distinct yet perceived as part of the same group. This "kernel of knowledge" would today be conceptualized as the phenomenon whereby plants within the same genus of the *Cucurbitaceae* family can cross-pollinate. The family encompasses more than one hundred genera, making such occurrences of cross-pollination relatively common.

Al-Iskandarī also describes a more mechanical method for manipulating cucurbits and exploiting their malleability by using a mold to shape them decoratively as they grow. The techniques for producing remarkable effects in garden plants – such as cross-grafting, perfumed fruits, and instant germination – form a distinct tradition within Arabic technical literature. This tradition likely originates from the so-called *Byzantine Book of Agriculture* (*Kutub al-Filāḥa al-Rūmiyya*), authored by Vindanios Anatolios (4th–5th century) and Cassianos Bassus Scholasticus (6th century), which were translated into Arabic multiple times in the 8th century.[11]

[9] See Raggetti 2021a, 187-195.

[10] See Raggetti 2021a, 194 (Nr. 8.1.21).

[11] See Ullmann 1972, 429-437; for the edition and Spanish translation of this work, see Linares 2015.

> **If you want to produce cucumbers, aubergines, and melons with writing in relief on their surface – anything you wish to write – or signs, engravings, the likeness of a wild or domestic animal, or anything else you may wish**
> Take molds made of mortar or gypsum, similar to those crafted from wax, and engrave the desired figure and then enclose one of these fruits inside it, leaving it inside until its growth is complete. When the mold is opened, the fruit, having expanded to fill the mold, will bear the exact imprint of the engraved design. If the mold contains writing, the text will appear in relief; the same applies to figures, and this is remarkably curious.

Cucurbits are also part of the *materia medica* and are frequently associated with cooling and diuretic effects. In the medical multiple-text manuscript MS Oxford Bodleian M. Marsh 537, the scribe – possibly to fill blank space at the bottom of a page between the title and the text of a pseudo-Galenic summary on urine – included a recipe for a diuretic medicinal powder (*safūf mudirr*) that appears to incorporate all the major varieties of cucurbits.[12]

MS Oxford Bodleian M. Marsh 537, f. 147r

A diuretic medicinal powder
Cucumber (*ḫiyār*), snake cucumber (*qiṯā*), gourd (*qara'*), melon (*biṭṭīḫ*), rock sugar, 15 of each one; fennel seeds (*rāziyānj*), tragacanth (*kaṯīrā'*), bitumen (*ḥajar al-Yahūd*), spikenard (*sunbul*), 2 [and a] half of each one to drink.

سفوف مدر
الخيار والقثى والقرع والبطيخ وسكر طبرزد
من كل واحدة ١٥ رازيانج وكثيرا وحجر اليهود وسنبل
من كل واحد ٢ نصف الشربة ه

The same therapeutic use is also attested when the Arabic tradition of Galenic medicine intersected with the early modern European tradition of iatrochemistry. The chief physician of the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet IV (r. 1648–1687), Ibn Sallūm, was a devoted admirer of Paracelsus and his followers, composing several works inspired by the "new medicine". His *Culmination of*

[12] For a detailed description of the manuscript, see *Fihrist*-Union Catalogues of Manuscripts from the Islamicate World, <https://www.fihrist.org.uk/catalog/manuscript_1131>.

Perfection in the Treatment of the Human Body (*Ġāyat al-itqān fī tadbīr badan al-insān*) includes an extensive section on extraction techniques using distillation, which varied depending on the substance being processed. Cold extraction in a bain-marie (literally, "the extraction of cold waters") was recommended for plant-based substances that would be damaged by intense heat, with gourd being one such example.[13]

> Extract of gourd (*qaraʿ*): it reduces the heat of fevers, quenches thirst and cleanses kidneys and bladder inducing copious urination. Take the gourd, peel it, crush it and distill it (lit., let it precipitate in drops) in *bain-marie*.

The ancient notion of cucurbits as fruits prone to acquiring the nature of the body that consumes them resurfaces in *The Treasure of Alexander* (*Kitāb ḏaḫīrat al-Iskandar*), a compilation of technical materials drawn from widely diverse sources. Its contents range from alchemy to the engraving of astrological talismans and the practical properties of animals.[14] The ninth chapter is devoted to "plants prone to transformation" (*al-nabāt al-mustaḥīla*) and includes three specimens.[15]

In this context, the notion is framed as part of nature's occult properties (*ḫawāṣṣ*), whose causes remain unknown but whose effects are empirically evident and practically exploitable. At the same time, the process is presented as an application of the spiritual magic attributed to Hermes.[16] Though retaining a clear echo of its representation in medicine, the concept of malleable fruit is extended to include the ability to sympathetically absorb unique faculties from the soil and the pot in which they are grown: planting a melon in a donkey's skull and marrow will produce a

[13] See Raggetti 2019, 30.
[14] For the edition of the frame tale and further references, see Raggetti 2021b.
[15] Ruska gives a brief summary of it, see Ruska 1926, 104-105.
[16] See Ullmann 1972, 369-378; see also, Van Bladel 2006.

fruit that deprives a person of rationality, while using a human skull and marrow yields a melon that sharpens the mind.[17]

[17] In general, the edition has been carried out using five available manuscript witnesses: MS British Library India Office 673 (I), MS Escorial 947 (E), MS Berlin We II 1209 (B); MS New York Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library Or 276 (N). The MS Teheran Mağlis 2783 is incomplete and the text ends at chapter four. These are the five witnesses of which it was possible to obtain a digital reproduction. For the complete list of manuscripts of *The Treasure of Alexander*, see Ullmann 1972, 376; and Sezgin 1971: IV 103–104. The edition's orthography is adapted to modern conventions. When the spelling of cucurbits' allegedly foreign names constitute a variant, the reading and the vocalization of MS I has been conventionally chosen.

الفن التاسع المذكور في خواص يتعلق بالنبات المستحيلة

الفن المدعو باسطيُطيا لُيطوس عيانوس ومعناه التدبير القابل للروحانيات الناقل للطباع وهو باب كان الحكماء في سالف الدهور يكتمونه ويعظمون صيانته لانه سُهَل المؤنة والوصول اليه حيّنٌ لمن أراده وفيه اعظم التصرّف والتأثر في طباع الناس وذلك أن البطيخ دون سائر النبات هو اسرع النبات استحالة الى ما مخالطه ويصادفه بحيث أنه بعد ان يؤكل اسرع المأكولات استحالةً الى ما يجده غالبا على البدن من الاخلاط فان كانت الصفراء غالبة على البدن فالبطيخ يستحيل في ذلك البدن الى الصفراء وان كان البغلم والرطوبة غالبين استحال اليهما وذلك لما في طبيعته من عظيم الاستحالة والتشبيه بما يجده ونقل الطباع من شيء الى شيء وهو من الاركان التي يعتمد عليها السَحَرة ونحن نذكر ما ذكره هرمس من افعاله فمن ذلك

صفة صنعة البطيخ الذي يدعى عَسالايُوس وتأويله لغة العقل

وذلك انه يبلّد خاطر آكله ويعمي قلبه حتى لا يفهم ولا نحفظ شيئا ولكنه يكون كالبهيمة تؤجذ جمجة حمار ميت وتدفنه في الارض مملوّة من التراب ويزرع فيها بزر البطيخ الذي قد لطخ بمخ الحمار ويتعا هذا الفلاح كما يتعا هذا البطيخ والمزروع بسَقي الماء في اوقاته

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1 التاسع] الثامن N | المذكور] E *om* | في] E ذكر N *add* | خواص] الخواص E **2** يتعلق] تتعلق E باسطيُطيا ليُطوس عيانوس] B باسطيُطيا ليطوس عنابوس I ; باسطيطا ليطوس عنابوس N **3** للروحانيات] الروحانيات N | الدهور] الدهر I **4** صيانته] صيانة B | حيّنٌ] B E I بين N **5** وفيه] N *om* **6** هو] وهو B | اسرع[1]... استحالة] اسرع النبات استحالة N *om* | الى ما] من N | مخالطه] يخالطه B ; المخالطة N | ويصادفه] ويصادفه N I **7** يؤكل] تؤكل E | المأكولات] الماكولات B E | استحالة] B E I استحالته N **8** من الاخلاط] B *om* | غالبة] عالية N فالبطيخ] فان البطيخ E **9** يستحيل] B *om* | في[1]...البدن في ذلك البدن] *add* استحال B **10** اليهما] اليه N | لما] ملا N | طبيعته] طبعه B | عظيم] عظم E والتشبيه] واللسيه N **11** الطباع] الطبايع B ; *add* لم يجده N | التي] الذي E **13** صفة] N E *om* | صنعة] B *om* ; I *interl* | عَسالايُوس I] عسيالاوس E ; عسيسالانوس B ; N *om* | وتأويله] قوله E ; وتاليفه N | لغة] وتسمعته B ; N *om* العقل] الفه N **14** شيئا] *add* كله N | ولكنه] للكنته N **15** يكون] I *om* | ميت] N *om* | وتدفنه] ويدفن B E | في...التراب] *add* شيئا لكنه يكون N **16** لطخ] يطبخ N **17** ويتعا] ويفاعده N | هذا] هذه I ; N *om* | الفلاح...بسَقي] الفلاح كما يتعا هذا البطيخ والمزروع يسَقي E ; الفلاح كما يتعا هذا البطيخ والمزروع يسَقي B | الماء] B *om*

IEBN

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Section Nine about the Occult Properties ascribed to the plants prone to transformation.

This section is titled *Asṭiyuṭiyā layuṭūs*, which means "the procedure to meet the spiritual entities (*rūḥaniyyāt*) that changes natural qualities (*aṭbāʿ*)"; the sages of old concealed this chapter and guarded it carefully, because it is a food easy to supply and reaching it may mean death to the one who had wanted it; in it there is the greatest power of action and influence on the inner nature (*ṭibāʿ*) of people. This is that the cucurbit, differently from the rest of the plants, it is quickest of them in changing into [the substance that] is mixed with it and agrees with it in such a manner that, after that it is eaten, the food quickly changes into the humour that is prevailing in the body. So, if yellow bile is prevailing in the body, then the cucurbit changes into yellow bile inside this body; if, instead, phlegm and moistness are prevailing in the body then [the cucurbit] changes into them, this is due to the great potential to change that is in its nature and the resemblance that it assumes with what it finds [in its proximity], and the conversion from one thing into another. This is one of the pillars on which magic (*siḥra*) lays, and we are going to mention what Hermes said about its actions. To this belongs:

Way of preparing the melon called *ʿAsālāyūs*, and its interpretation (*taʾwīl*) is 'the mind'.

This renders that heart of whoever eats it feverish, his thinking will become foolish to the point that he will not understand or remember anything, he will rather be like a beast. The skull of a dead donkey should be taken, buried in the ground after having been filled with earth, the cucurbit seeds should be planted inside it, once they have been spattered with donkey brain (*muḫḫ*) and so whoever cultivates them will be like the melon [affected by the donkey parts]; what has been planted should be irrigated with water in the appropriate times for it, Care must be taken to ensure that the manure remains contained within the skull and does not overflow, and the irrigation should continue until the cucurbit has given fruit. Then, whoever eats from it will become foolish with little understanding and sense, devoid of ingenuity, uncapable of discriminating between good and evil in what he wants.

Way of preparing the melon called *Kalkyānūs* and its translation (*tafsīr*) is 'increase of mind and intellect'.
The melon seeds have to be taken and treated in the way we have already explained, only in the skull of a man, spattering them with human brain, and irrigating as we mentioned until they bear fruit. Then, the one who eats from it will become brilliant, full of intelligence and intellect, remembering everything he hears and understanding whatever he wants; he will be praised for the increase in his intelligence, intellect, and understanding, endowed in this with prophetic insight, correctness in guessing, and knowledge of most of the affairs hidden from him, the true facts will easily manifest to him, and his beliefs and dreams will be trustworthy.

Way of preparing the melon called *Kayṭayṭiyāṭā*, and its translation is 'purgative of the yellow bile', that is to say that each cucurbit purges a lot of yellow gall with [its] faculty.
About ten *raṭl* of the twigs from *lāǧiya* plant should be taken, dried, ground with earth and the same amount of manure; this should be placed in a hole dug in the ground, and the seeds should be planted in its center; the melon will be as we described.

End of chapter nine.

Cucurbits exemplify the extraordinary properties of nature, revealing that its most remarkable gifts often reside in the seemingly ordinary vegetable garden.*

* As one of the many *Doni della Zucca*, this contribution extends the honorary title of member of the *Cucurbit Club* to its Esteemed Dedicatee.

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Des chants de la contestation aux slogans du hirak algérien

AZIZA BOUCHERIT

From February 2019 to May/June 2021, Algeria witnessed the most significant popular protest movement, the hirak, that the country has experienced since its Independence in 1962. Unprecedented in its scale, duration and constancy, the hirak spread throughout the public space, which became during the time of the demonstrations, the stage on which the population demanded a complete overhaul of the existing political system and asserted its rights. During the protest marches, in which millions of Algerians took part throughout the country, slogans were chanted and protest songs were sung.

The study is based on data collected during demonstrations in Algiers in February 2019 and 2020, in the press and on social networks for slogans. The songs were collected on the YouTube platform, where most of the singers (groups of football club supporters and rappers) have their own site.

From this corpus, slogans and songs were linked in order to show that the songs, which punctuated the protest marches, were powerful vectors of the claims that characterised the hirak. In doing so, it will be shown that by going beyond their own audience, the composers of the songs, by challenging the discourse of power and its legitimacy, pose themselves as collective enunciator, who is both the bearer of popular claims and actor in their formation.

Keywords: Algeria – hirak – protest expression – songs – slogans

1. Introduction

1.1 Le contexte

Le 9 février 2019 l'annonce de la candidature d'Abdelaziz Bouteflika à l'élection présidentielle est la goutte d'eau qui fait déborder le vase et provoque la plus extraordinaire insurrection civique que l'Algérie a connue depuis son Indépendance (1962). À partir du 22 février, et durant près de deux ans, les vendredis d'abord, les mardis ensuite pour les étudiants, des milliers d'Algériens sont descendus dans les rues pour s'opposer au cinquième mandat d'un président malade et incapable d'exercer ses fonctions depuis 2013. Inédit par son ampleur, sa durée et sa constance, ce mouvement populaire, le hirak,[1] s'est déployé dans tout l'espace public devenu, le temps des manifestations, la scène où la population, au-delà du refus d'un cinquième mandat, rejetait le système politique en place, exigeait sa refonte et revendiquait ses droits.

De nombreuses publications[2] ont souligné le caractère massif, collectif, pacifique, fraternel et civique du hirak et, dans le même temps, la formidable créativité politique, sociale, artistique et linguistique qu'il a suscitée. En témoignent les outils de mobilisation mis en œuvre par les manifestants pour faire

[1] Le terme a été utilisé dans d'autres pays du monde arabe (Yémen 2009, Irak 2011, Maroc (Rif) 2016) pour désigner des mouvements de protestation populaire visant à changer le système politique en place. Ce terme s'est imposé en Algérie pour désigner ce mouvement qui a aussi été appelé, *révolution du sourire* du fait de son caractère festif et pacifique, d'où *El-Hirak el-silmi* 'mouvement pacifique' ou *révolution/ mouvement du 22 février* par référence à la date du début des manifestations d'ampleur et, moins souvent, *hirak chaâbi* 'mouvement populaire'.

[2] Le nombre de publications traitant du hirak, de son émergence à nos jours, est considérable. Il suffit d'écrire *hirak Algérie* dans un moteur de recherche pour le constater. Une partie seulement de ces publications suffirait à remplir l'espace réservé à cette publication. En conséquence seuls les travaux cités figureront en bibliographie.

entendre leurs revendications, notamment au moyen des slogans[3] qui ont marqué les différentes phases du mouvement.

Dans le même temps, ces revendications étaient amplifiées par les chants qui rythmaient les marches et exprimaient, d'une autre façon, la volonté des manifestants d'en finir avec le système en place et d'œuvrer collectivement à l'avènement d'un nouveau régime politique. Pour nombre d'entre eux, ces chants, sont nés dans les stades de football qui, bien avant l'émergence du hirak étaient des lieux de contestation du pouvoir et, par là même, des lieux de relais des revendications de la population,[4] notamment de celles de la jeunesse.[5] Un autre genre musical, le rap, a également contribué à diffuser des messages de protestation. Né au milieu des années 1990, le rap algérien, profondément façonné par les troubles sociaux et politiques qu'a connus l'Algérie à la fin des années 1980 et durant les années 1990,[6] est revendicateur et protestataire – ses textes, à caractère social et politique, dénonçant avec force le malaise de la jeunesse et les abus du pouvoir.[7]

Ainsi, lorsqu'en février 2019 le hirak prend forme, il se développe sur un fond de malaise social, économique et politique que des groupes de jeunes chanteurs avaient déjà mis au grand jour. Leurs textes, expression critique radicale d'un pouvoir politique et policier soutenu par les militaires, exprimaient

[3] On trouvera dans l'ouvrage de Karima Aït Dahmane (2019) de nombreuses photos qui illustrent l'inventivité linguistique déployée par les manifestants. Pour ce qui est des études linguistiques (alternance codique, emprunt, néologisme), on peut citer, parmi bien d'autres, les articles de Benazouz et Refrafi Soraya (2022) et Miri-Benabdallah et Yahiaoui (2022) ou les mémoires de fin d'études universitaires de Merabti (2020-2021) et Ouarez et Abed (2020-2021).

[4] Ben Boubaker 2020.

[5] Correia 2019.

[6] Il s'agit, pour les premiers, des émeutes d'octobre 1988 durement réprimées par l'armée (les bilans non gouvernementaux font état de 500 à 600 morts) et la police (3500 arrestations et des dizaines de jeunes gens torturés après leur arrestation) (Benkheira 1990). Et, pour les seconds, de la guerre civile, aussi appelée décennie noire, qui opposa les partis islamistes au gouvernement algérien de 1991-2002 et qui fut marquée par le terrorisme des organisations islamiques et la répression des services de sécurité algériens (Martínez 1998).

[7] Ikhlef 2018 ; Miliani 2002 ; Virolle 2007.

pleinement le désespoir d'une jeunesse frappée par le chômage, privée d'avenir, poussée à l'émigration et dénonçaient l'injustice, l'oppression, le mépris des puissants et la corruption. En d'autres termes, leurs chants disaient la mal-vie, comme est nommée en Algérie cette vie sans perspective d'où les rêves sont exclus. Dans ces conditions, les protestations contre la perpétuation du mandat du président Bouteflika, déjà apparues en 2014 pour faire obstacle au quatrième, ne pouvaient que se renforcer à l'idée du cinquième. C'est dans ce contexte qu'un chant, né dans un stade, *La casa del Mouradia*, devient l'hymne du hirak.

1.2 Le propos

Dans cet article je me propose de rapprocher slogans et chants contestataires afin de montrer comment ces derniers ont été de puissants vecteurs des revendications qui ont caractérisé le hirak. Ce faisant, on verra qu'en dépassant leur propre auditoire (groupe de supporteurs de clubs de football ou de rap), les compositeurs de ces chants, en contestant les discours du pouvoir et sa légitimité, se posent en énonciateur collectif tout à la fois porteur des revendications populaires et acteur de leur formation.

L'étude s'appuie sur des données collectées lors de manifestations à Alger en février 2019 et 2020, dans la presse et sur les réseaux sociaux pour ce qui est des slogans. Quant aux chants, ils ont été recueillis sur la plate-forme YouTube où la plupart des groupes de chanteurs disposent de leur propre site.

Dans ce qui suit, je présenterai d'abord *La casa del Mouradia* en soulignant ce qui a favorisé son adoption comme emblème lors du hirak (§ 2.1) et les slogans qui ont caractérisé le hirak (§ 2.2). Puis je rapporterai les différentes revendications exprimées dans les slogans aux chants dans lesquels elles apparaissent afin de montrer comment, d'une voix à l'autre, circulent et se rejoignent les messages contestataires (§ 3).

1.3 Les conventions

Les slogans cités dans cet article ont été scandés et écrits en arabe algérien, avec de fréquents mélanges de langues (arabe standard,

français et, dans une moindre mesure, anglais). Quelle que soit la/les langue(s) utilisée(s), ils sont écrits en italiques tels qu'ils ont été relevés (c'est-à-dire en graphie arabe ou latine et avec ce qui pourrait être considéré comme des fautes d'orthographe).

Les chants sont notés en phonétique large pour l'arabe (y compris pour les emprunts au français qui y sont intégrés), en graphie traditionnelle pour les séquences en français ou en anglais qu'ils contiennent.

Dans le corps du texte la traduction des slogans en arabe est notée entre guillemets simples ; les slogans en anglais n'ont pas été traduits. La traduction des chants est restée au plus près du sens littéral dans la mesure du possible. Compte tenu de mon objectif je n'ai pas opté pour le mot-à-mot et je n'ai pas cherché à rendre les effets stylistiques (rythme, assonance, rime sont cependant tout-à-fait perceptibles si l'on s'applique à oraliser les chants). J'ai cherché à restituer le contenu des textes en les inscrivant dans leur situation d'énonciation, ce qui explique les commentaires qui les accompagnent. Pour autant cela ne signifie pas que je n'ai pas apprécié pour ce qu'elles sont les qualités musicales, esthétiques et poétiques qui ont pris part au grand succès de ces chants.

2. Du chant aux slogans

2.1 La casa del Mouradia

2.1.1 Les circonstances

L'indignation provoquée par l'annonce de la candidature de Bouteflika à un cinquième mandat s'est donc exprimée en premier sur les gradins des terrains de football avec *La casa del Mouradia*, l'hymne des supporteurs de l'USMA (Union Sportive de la Médina d'Alger). Créé près d'un an avant le début du hirak, le chant, composé par un collectif de supporteurs, les Ouled El-Bahdja ('Les enfants de la joyeuse', un des surnoms d'Alger), doit son titre à la série télévisée espagnole qui retrace le braquage de la fabrique nationale de la monnaie d'Espagne, *La casa de papel* 'la

maison de papier'. Ici, le palais présidentiel algérien, *La casa del Mouradia* (du nom de la commune où il est situé) est assimilé à la banque espagnole et les voleurs au président Bouteflika et à sa bande, *l-ʕiṣāba*,[8] comme on la nomme en Algérie. Les thèmes qui sont évoqués dans ce chant et son contenu, fortement hostile au pouvoir, justifient tout-à-fait qu'il ait été repris dans toute l'Algérie et soit devenu l'hymne du hirak – la vidéo du chant, mise en ligne sur YouTube en avril 2018, avait été vue plus de cinq millions de fois en février 2019 et, en août 2020, il sera classé deuxième dans le "Top 50 mondial des chants de supporters mythiques" par le magazine *So Foot*.

2.1.2 Le texte

Refrain (X 2)
saʕat əl-fǧər u ma ǧa-ni num / rani nkõṣomi ġer bə-šwiyya
L'heure de l'aube et le sommeil ne m'est pas venu. Je consomme [de la drogue] à petites doses.
škun əs-səbba u škun nlum / məllina l-mʕiša hadiya
Quelle en est la cause et qui je [dois] blâmer ? / Nous en avons assez de cette vie.

Premier couplet (X 2).
f-əl-ula nqulu ǧazət / ḥšaw-ha-l-na b-əl-ʕošriya
Le premier [mandat], nous dirons qu'il est passé / Ils nous ont eu avec la décennie [noire].[9]
f-əl-tāniya l-ḥkaya banət / *La casa del Mouradia*
Au deuxième, l'histoire est devenue claire, *La casa d'El Mouradia*.[10]
f-əl-tlata lə-blad šyanət b-əl-maṣaleḥ əš-šaḥṣya
Au troisième, le pays s'est amaigri à cause des intérêts personnels.[11]

[8] Litt. 'troupe, bande', dans le contexte, *gang*: 'association de malfaiteurs organisés en bande'.

[9] Allusion à l'instrumentalisation de cette décennie, argument sans cesse avancé par les gouvernants pour prévenir toute contestation.

[10] Désigne les acteurs politiques et économiques (membres du clan familial du président, hommes d'affaires privés) aux commandes du pays.

[11] Allusion aux détournements de l'argent public.

f-əl-rəbʕa l-pupiya matət u mazalət l-qaḍiya
Au quatrième, la poupée[12] est morte mais l'affaire se poursuit.

Refrain (X 2)

Deuxième couplet (X 2)
u l-ḫamsa rah tswive / binat-hom rahi məbniyya
Le cinquième suit / Entre eux il est [déjà] conclu.
u l-*passé* rahu *archivé / la voix* taʕ əl-ḫuriyya
Et le *passé* est *archivé / La voix* de la liberté …
viraj-na l-hadra *privé* / yəʕarfū-h ki yətqiyya
[Dans] notre *virage* la discussion est *privée* / Ils le connaissent quand il déborde.[13]
madrasa u lazəm *ceve* / biru maḥw l-ʔumiyya
L'école et il faut un C.V. / Un bureau d'élimination de l'analphabétisme.[14]

2.1.3 Le discours

Si l'introduction du chant fixe d'emblée le cadre du récit, la malvie dans laquelle se débat une partie de la population, en particulier la jeunesse, et en interroge les causes, ce sont surtout les deux couplets (bilan sévère des quatre mandats du président Bouteflika, attente négative et désabusée quant au cinquième, annonce de la contestation) qui avertissent du mouvement de protestation et des revendications qui furent les siennes. Dans son ensemble il s'agit d'un message politique adressé aux gouvernants auquel les manifestants ont totalement adhéré – adhésion fondée

[12] Désigne le président, incapable de se déplacer et de parler, poupée, marionnette aux mains de son entourage qui l'exhibe et le manipule. Par référence à son état, il sera aussi appelé *momie* ou *zombi* lors du hirak.

[13] Le *virage* est une partie des tribunes où se regroupent les supporteurs les plus actifs d'un club de football. Ici il réfère à *nous*, supporteurs de l'USMA, porte-paroles du malaise de la jeunesse, force de protestation (litt. *yə-t-qiyya* signifie 'il vomit', fig. 'rendre gorge', soit 'restituer par la force ce qu'on a pris ou acquis par des voies illicites').

[14] Comprendre, le *virage* est une école sélective ('il faut un C.V.' pour y entrer) qui lutte contre l'analphabétisme, par comparaison avec l'école publique algérienne.

sur une connaissance commune de la situation du pays et des conditions de vie des habitants. Rapporté au temps du hirak le chant donne à entendre les slogans des manifestants.

2.2 *Les slogans*

Avec des slogans, de février 2019 à mai/juin 2021, fin des marches bi-hebdomadaires, les manifestants ont d'abord dit non à la réélection de Bouteflika :

> - simplement mais clairement : *Matzidch dkika ya Bouteflika* 'Pas une minute de plus, Bouteflika', *Pas de prolongation !, makach el khamssa ya Bouteflika* '*Pas de cinquième* Bouteflika', لا للعهدة الخامسة [lā l-əl ʕahda l-ḥamsa] 'Non au cinquième engagement', '*Ashrun sena barakat* 'Vingt ans ça suffit', *Twenty Years is Enough !* ;
> - tout aussi clairement mais avec humour : *Seul Chanel fait Numéro 5* (allusion au célèbre parfum de la marque Chanel), *Le deuxième, troisième puis les quatrièmes mandats sont les symptômes d'une maladie grave : le système. Le peuple réclame un traitement curatif et non symptomatique* (slogan des personnels de santé, 4 février 2020, Béjaïa, cité par Aggoun, 2021, 44) ou encore avec détermination : *djibou el BRI djibou /zidou Assaîqa makach el khamssa ya Bouteflika* 'Amenez la BRI [Brigade de Recherche et *d'Intervention*], amenez / ajoutez-y les troupes spéciales, pas le cinquième, Bouteflika'.

Puis,[15] cette revendication satisfaite, les manifestants ont exigé le départ des dirigeants : يتنحاو قاع *Yetnahaw gaâ, Qu'ils dégagent tous, GOULNA GA3 C'EST GA3* 'On a dit tous, c'est tous' ; en affirmant fermement leur volonté de l'obtenir : *rana macheyine hata tenahaw gaâ* 'Nous marcherons jusqu'à ce que vous partiez tous', *maranach habssine* 'Nous ne nous arrêterons pas', *We will never stop.*

[15] Pour une chronologie, v. Zerrouky 2021 et Allal 2021.

Ils exigeaient ainsi la fin d'un système politique : *Système dégage !*[16] (et non pas seulement le départ d'un homme)[17] et la refondation du mode de gouvernance : *الشعب يريد إستقلال* [əš-šaʕb yurīd-l-ʔistiqlāl] 'Le peuple veut l'indépendance !'.

En d'autres termes, avec leurs slogans, les manifestants disaient qu'il était nécessaire de passer d'un système autoritaire à un système démocratique pour qu'advienne une 'Algérie libre et démocratique' : *djazaer horra dimoqratiya*. Une Algérie débarrassée de l'emprise du militaire sur le politique : *دولة مدنية ماشي عسكرية dawla madania, machi âaskaria* 'État civil, non militaire', *Djoumhouria machi caserna* 'Une république pas une caserne', et de la corruption : *Système mafieux, dégage !!!* Une Algérie où le peuple serait respecté : *صوتي مقدس مثل كرامتي وحريتي* [ṣawti muqaddəs məṯl karamti wa ḥurriyati] 'Ma voix est sacrée comme ma dignité et ma liberté' et d'où la mal-vie et une de ses conséquences, l'émigration clandestine, auraient disparu : *Laissez-nous aimer l'Algérie*, *Pour la 1ere fois j'ai pas envie de te quitter mon Algérie*.[18]

Dans la suite, j'ai rapproché ces 'nécessités' des chants qui en font état. Plus exactement, dans la mesure où il n'y a pas correspondance terme à terme entre slogan et chant (le slogan, forme brève, véhicule un message, le chant, plus long, en véhicule souvent plusieurs), j'ai associé une ou des séquences de ces chants aux principales 'nécessités' mises en avant par les slogans : le pouvoir aux civils (§ 3.1), la liberté (§ 3.2), la fin de la corruption (§ 3.3) et, enfin et surtout, la fin de la mal-vie (§ 3.4).

[16] Slogan que l'on peut rapprocher de إرحل 'Dégage !', condensé du célèbre : الشعب يريد إسقاط النظام [aš-šaɛb yurīd ʔisqāṭ al-niẓām] 'Le peuple veut la chute du régime', scandés lors des Printemps arabes de 2011. Place Tahrir au Caire en 2011, un chant du même nom composé par Ramy Essam, a été l'hymne des manifestants réclamant le départ du président Hosni Moubarak.

[17] En atteste la réplique d'un jeune algérois à une journaliste de Sky News Arabia qui, en direct lors d'une manifestation, affirmait que les Algériens étaient contents de l'annonce du retrait de la candidature de Bouteflika et de la nomination d'un président par intérim : [ma-kan-š mən-ha / manaš mətqanʕin gaʕitik b-had-taġyîr / naḥaw *piõ* u ʕawdu daru *piõ* waḥd aḫor / yətnaḥaw gaʕ / yətnaḥaw gaʕ], 'C'est pas vrai / on n'est pas content du tout de ce changement / ils ont enlevé un *pion* et ont recommencé, ils ont mis un autre *pion* / qu'ils dégagent tous / qu'ils dégagent tous.'

[18] Inscription en cursive sur un mur citée par Aït Dahmane 2019, 167.

3. Des slogans aux chants

3.1 État civil et non militaire

Les revendications concernant la fin de l'emprise du haut commandement de l'Armée sur le politique sont, sans conteste, parmi les plus neuves. En effet, dans la longue série des mobilisations populaires qui ont eu lieu en Algérie depuis l'Indépendance, jamais aucune d'entre elles ne l'avait réclamée aussi franchement : *Les généraux à la poubelle, Esma' esma' ya al-Gaïd dawla madania, esma' esma'ya al-Gaïd machi 'askaria* 'Écoute, écoute Gaïd [Salah, Chef d'État-major de l'Armée nationale populaire], État civil, écoute, écoute Gaïd, pas militaire'. Ce faisant, les manifestants ne mettaient pas l'Armée en cause, au contraire, c'est la fraternité entre elle et le peuple qui était scandée lors des marches : *Jeich-chaab, khawa-khawa, Gaïd Salah m3a al-khawana* [žeš-šaʕb ḫawa-ḫawa gaid salaḥ mʕa l-ḫawana] 'Armée et peuple sont frères, Gaïd Salah est avec les traîtres'.

Pour ce qui est des chants contestataires, on peut faire la même observation quant à la nouveauté de la revendication. Au stade actuel de mes travaux, je ne l'ai relevée que dans un chant du rappeur Diaz dont le titre et le texte critiquent de manière ouverte le poids excessif des militaires dans la vie politique du pays en les accusant de détournements d'argent public.

#Civil fi bled el 3askar '#Un civil au pays des militaires' (Diaz, 2015)
ma *hip-hop* ma *rasta* / nḥab musiqa wa *basta*
Ni *hip hop* ni *rasta* / J'aime la musique et *basta* [je ne choisis pas]
ndir mʕa-ha *1-2* / wa dawla l-ṭaḥ fi-ha l-wasṭa
Je fais [je joue] avec elle 1-2 / et l'État [est] le perdant du jeu [car je ne choisis pas, je ne peux pas choisir au pays des militaires ?]
šḥal *milliards* tmaske mən l-woqt l-ḥisab bi l-*pascal*
Combien de milliards tu [l'État] as masqué [caché, volé] depuis le temps où on calculait en Pascal [billet de 500 francs français, à l'effigie de Pascal diffusé en France de 1969 à 1994, appelé *le Pascal*]
[ya] star *Hasthag civil* fi l-blәd l ʕaskariya
Dieu protecteur ! *Hasthag Civil* au pays de l'armée.

3.2 Algérie libre et démocratique

Plus fréquemment que le rejet du commandement militaire, l'aspiration à la liberté apparaît régulièrement dans les chants. Présente dans *La casa del Mouradia* la liberté est appelée très précisément dans deux des chants qui ont porté le hirak : *Ultima verba*[19] des Ouled El-Bahdja (sortie quatre jours avant le début du hirak) et son adaptation par le rappeur Soolking sous le titre *Liberté* (sortie début mars 2019). L'enregistrement en duo (Soolking / Ouled El Bahdja) de *Liberté* aura un immense succès (115 millions de vue sur YouTube au 21 mars 2019) et, comme *La casa del Mouradia*, ce chant sera un de ceux les plus repris par les manifestants.

Ultima verba (Ouled El Bahdja)
La liberté, la liberté, la liberté, le virage rahu iq**ul** [dit] *liberté*
La liberté, la liberté, la liberté li yərḍā ġeyr əl-məđl**ul** [pour celui qui ne se satisfait pas d'être humilié]

La liberté (Soolking & Ouled El Bahdja)
La liberté, la liberté, la liberté
C'est d'abord dans nos cœurs
La liberté, la liberté, la liberté
Nous, ça nous fait pas peur.

Ainsi, après la décennie noire, après les vingt ans de présidence Bouteflika, le *virage* (collectif des Ouled Bahdja) et *Nous* (le duo), métaphores de l'Algérie, réclament la liberté pour la population, victime et otage d'un système injuste.

La liberté (Soolking & Ouled El Bahdja)
Libérez li ra-hi *otage, libérez* l-mərḥuma

[19] Titre d'un poème de Victor Hugo, *Les Châtiments*, VII-XVII. « Nous l'avons choisi comme titre ... en raison de ses nombreuses similitudes avec le contenu de ce poème qui, derrière les murs de l'exil, a servi de procès contre le pouvoir et le souverain [Napoléon III] ... poème qui a été considéré comme un refus, une réponse révoltée à leur politique, un avertissement, une traduction de la voix du peuple et une affirmation des valeurs de citoyenneté et de liberté. » (*Facebook*, USMA, Ouled Bahdja, 16 février 2019, traduit de l'arabe A.B.).

Libérez celle qui est *otage, libérez* la défunte
kayən ḫaləl fi-l-qaḍaʔ
Il y a une irrégularité dans le jugement [un vice de procédure].
Libérez ceux qui sont otages, nous, c'est tout c'qu'on a
On a que la liberta
u ḫna homa l-ʔibtalaʔ / ya ḥukuma /
Et nous [pour] eux [ce sera] le malheur [Nous serons votre malheur] / Ô gouvernement
w ən-nar hadi ma-təṭfa-š
Et ce feu ne s'éteindra pas
Ceci est notre message, notre ultima verba

Liberté, rejet du pouvoir et de la corruption allant de pair :

Ultima verba (Ouled El Bahdja)
təsqaṭ əd-dawla u li ḫədmu *l'autoroute*
Que tombe l'État et ceux qui ont construit *l'autoroute*
ya li ḥsabtu kulliš yətbaʕ dirtulu suma
Ô ceux qui pensiez que tout se vend, vous en aviez fixé le prix
w əl-bahdja ma-təťšra-š
Mais El-Bahdja ne s'achète pas

3.3 Système mafieux, dégage !!!

D'où les slogans rejetant des élections qui maintiendraient *l-ʕiṣāba*, le gang, au pouvoir : ما كاش الانتخابات يا العصابات [mā-kā-š əl-ᵊntiḫābāt yā l-ʕiṣābat] 'Pas d'élections espèce de bandits', ceux signifiant aux dirigeants qu'ils ont trahi les promesses de la révolution algérienne dont ils se réclament : *klitou lebled, ya serraqin* 'Vous avez mangé le pays espèces de voleurs'[20] ainsi que ceux se réappropriant des icônes historiques, symboles de la guerre de libération nationale : *Ya Didouche / ya ʒmirouche / ljazair klaw-ha le-wʔouch* [ya diduš / ya ʕamiruš / l-dzaʔir klaw-ha lə-wḥuš] 'Oh Didouche ! Oh Amirouche ! L'Algérie, ils l'ont mangée, les monstres [litt. bête sauvage, brute]'.

[20] La version plus crue : *Vous avez niqué le pays, bande de donneurs* [connotation homosexuelle] *!* scandée le 1er mai 2018 lors de la finale de la coupe d'Algérie entre la Jeunesse Sportive de Kabylie et l'Union Sportive Madinet Bel Abbès, ne sera pas reprise par les marcheurs du hirak

Mentionnée dans une des strophes de *La casa del Mouradia* : 'Au troisième, le pays s'est amaigri à cause des intérêts personnels', la corruption est déjà l'objet, en 2008, d'un chant du rappeur Rabah Donquishoot, justemment intitulé *Ya serraqin* 'Eh vous les voleurs !' dans lequel il conspue *l-ʕiṣāba*, dépeinte comme un groupe de prédateurs.

Ya serraqin, 'Eh vous les voleurs !' (Rabah Donquishoot, 2008)[21]
serraqin / dəm u l-bərd li fi saḥrari raqd
Voleurs ! Le sang et le froid de ceux qui dorment dans les déserts
serraqin / ḥakəm ḫaba-h ġaši nsa-h
Voleurs ! Le gouverneur qui a caché les gens et les a oubliés
serraqin / ḥaq-ək əddu-l-i win ḥabbit-u
Voleurs ! Ton droit, rends-le-moi, dis-moi où tu l'as caché ?
serraqin / qul ya məsʔul win miliun əl-bitrul
Voleurs ! Dis-moi, oh responsable, où sont les millions du pétrole ?

À l'issue du quatrième mandat du président Bouteflika, le clientélisme, le corporatisme et, leur corollaire, la corruption ont envahi le système[22] et insupportent davantage encore la population et les chants en sont l'écho.

Chkoun sbabna ? 'Qui est coupable' (Diamant Noir & Amarillo Negro (Union Sportive Madinet El-Harrach, 2018)[23]
dzaïr baʕtu-ha u qsəmtu-ha / šritu gaʕ *les villas* fi *Paris*
L'Algérie, vous l'avez vendue et partagée / vous avez tous acheté *des villas* à Paris
uləd l-ḥarka[24] hadu li baʕu-ha / zawali fi blad-u ra-hu kari
Les fils de *harkis* [c'est] eux qui l'ont vendue [l'Algérie], le pauvre dans son pays est locataire
iḫəlu-k dima ʕayəš f-əl maḥna tḫəməm ġer ʕal l-ḫobza w drari
Ils te laissent toujours vivre dans la misère, préoccupé seulement par ton gagne-pain et tes enfants

[21] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1WDayXHXfWs&ab_channel=camizon.
[22] Dris 2021, 29.
[23] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNrs20ym6Q4&ab_channel=GRiNtACURVA.
[24] Litt. 'les enfants de la ḥarka' qui renvoie ici à la troupe de supplétifs qui ont combattu dans l'armée française durant la guerre d'indépendance. En Algérie, le terme *ḥarki* est souvent devenu synonyme de 'traître'.

əl šaʕb l-yuma ʕtawl əl taʕmar, desespera məli rahu sari
Le peuple, aujourd'hui, ils lui donnent de la drogue, il désespère de ce qui se passe
škun sbab-na / homa li sbab-na / sbab ʕdab-na
Quelle est la cause [de nos malheurs] ? C'est eux qui nous les causent / la cause de notre châtiment.

Et ils ajoutent :

La solution est dans l-ḥarga.[25]
yamma qol-li ʕläh ra-ki təbki
Ô maman dis-moi pourquoi tu pleures ?
yak haduk li ḫawnu l-fəllaga
Oui ! C'est eux qui ont trahi les fellagas [combattants partisans de l'Algérie indépendante]
ḫəlli-ni nahrəb u nrisqui
Laisse-moi fuir et risquer [ma vie].

3.4 La mal-vie

Assurément, une des conséquences les plus douloureuses de la détresse d'une partie de la jeunesse, la mal-vie qui ruine toute perspective d'avenir, est le recours à l'émigration clandestine. Parmi les slogans du hirak, peu d'entre eux y font référence mais le phénomène de la *ḥarga* et le sort de ceux, les *ḥarraga*, qui risquent leur vie en mer ne sont pas ignorés des manifestants et de leurs slogans : *Que Dieu accorde sa miséricorde aux harragas*, *Bouteflika, je ne te pardonnerai pas, tu as volé notre passé et notre présent. Nos frères ont été mangés par les poissons. Dieu te fera payer. #Yetna7awGa3.*

[25] Litt. 'brûlure'. Le terme désigne ici la migration clandestine des personnes, surtout des jeunes hommes, les *ḥarraga* 'brûleurs', qui quittent clandestinement leur pays sur des embarcations de fortune pour rejoindre l'Europe. Les *ḥarraga* 'brûlent' les frontières [au sens de 'brûler un feu rouge'], tout comme il leur arrive de brûler leurs papiers d'identité pour échapper à l'expulsion lorsqu'ils arrivent en Europe, s'ils y arrivent.

En fait, de longue date des chants ont résonné de la souffrance de l'émigration et de l'exil.[26] Dans le cas présent, deux chants m'ont paru particulièrement représentatifs de la détresse qui conduit à la *ḥarga* et, quelquefois, au recours à la drogue.

Babour el-louḥ 'La barque de bois' (Ouled El Bahdja, 2018)[27]
ma-rani-š qadər naḥmal had əl-ʕdab / u zman rahu yṭol aʕliya
Je ne peux plus supporter cette torture / le temps semble s'écouler lentement sur moi
li ndirha taʕkəs-li / *pourtant* tḥmam swab / *impasse* l-mʕiša hadiya….
Ce que je fais m'est contraire / Pourtant, les pensées sont droites / Cette vie est impasse
w nqol ḫlas / w əl-ġalṭa nʕawəd ndir-ha *1000 fois*
Je dis ça suffit / et la faute je recommence à la faire mille fois.
…
ḫali-ni nroḥ / qalbi mažroḥ
Laisse-moi partir / mon cœur est blessé
ḫali-ni nroḥ / fə babor əl-luḥ
Laisse-moi partir / sur le bateau de bois

Louḥet el-mout 'La planche de la mort' (Union Sportive Madinet Annaba, 2018)[28]
Algérien yifloti / ʕayəm / ma-wṣlu-š babor luḥ
Un Algérien flotte / il nage / le bateau de bois n'est pas arrivé [à destination]
Même li uṣal raho hayəm / ydur / ma-lga-š win iroh
Même celui qui arrive erre / il tourne en rond / il n'a pas trouvé où aller
m… *système* taʕ l-bhayəm / *l-algerie* ṭallaʕ fi l-roḥ
[À cause de ce] *système* [conduit par] des ânes / l'Algérie agonise (litt. ṭallaʕ fi l-roḥ 'faire monter dans l'âme')
šafu šaʕb ʕla ḥaqo ṣāyəm / gəlbo l-bləd qahwa muḥ
Ils ont vu que le peuple sur ses droits s'abstenait [et] ils ont transformé le pays en bazar [*qahwa muḥ*, litt. 'café de Moh'

[26] Ben Boubaker 2020.
[27] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3LZfBnUiz0&ab_channel=EuroServ.
[28] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ryB0LRXoUrc&ab_channel=Lesind%C3%A9pendantsdeb%C3%B4ne.

désigne ici un lieu où règne un grand désordre, en français familier le terme approprié est *bordel*].

ḫdəmna tʕabna / *jamais* l-ḥagna / l-ʕwam ətʕadi / w makən walo
On a travaillé dur / jamais nos droits [on a eu] / les années passent et rien ne change

kun l-bləd aʕṭat-na ḥaq-na / *jamais* f-la *résine* nroḥo (bis)
Si notre pays nous avait donné nos droits / *jamais* dans la résine (cannabis) serions allés [jamais nous serions tombés dans la drogue] (bis)

zawali *malgré* tout daḥka m dəmʕa / ... gaʕed ipose fə *saint- cloud*
Le pauvre *malgré tout* rit [à travers ses] larmes / ... il prend la pose [photo] à St Cloud [plage à Annaba].

L'espoir m-əl bʕid yibrəq / *les medias* fi- bləd-o yaḥkiw ʕla l-ḥut azrak
L'espoir de loin brille / les *médias* dans son pays parlent de la baleine bleue [jeu Smartphone où, durant 50 jours, le joueur doit réaliser un défi, le dernier défi étant le suicide du joueur].

Annabi l-ḥuta klato ...
Le Annabi [habitant de Annaba] les poissons l'ont mangé ...

Les sentiments de tristesse, de colère, de frustration et de souffrance exprimés dans ces chants décrivent avec une grande justesse la situation dans laquelle se trouvent de nombreux jeunes en Algérie. Mais surtout, comme ces deux longs extraits ont voulu le montrer, ces chants traitent de la réalité profonde de l'Algérie, de sa situation sociale, économique et politique. D'une réalité où la *ḥarga*, malgré la prison,[29] la mort et l'exil devient le seul moyen d'envisager un avenir.

4. Pour ne pas conclure

De bien des façons ces deux chants, comme ceux cités auparavant, sont des révélateurs du vécu d'une grande partie de la population algérienne. C'est pourquoi, on peut considérer que leurs créateurs, en se posant en énonciateur collectif, tout à la fois porteur des revendications (écho du sentiment populaire) et acteur de leur formation (participant à) ont été des voix de la

[29] En Algérie même l'émigration illégale est un délit et les *ḥarraga* sont passibles de peine de prison et d'amende.

contestation sociale et de la mobilisation politique. Sous cet aspect, on peut alors considérer que le hirak doit beaucoup à cette jeunesse dont la conscience politique aigüe a permis, avec ses chants, d'ouvrir la voie à une critique radicale du système algérien dans son ensemble. La reprise des chants comme emblèmes du hirak lors des marches le démontre.

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Il viaggio in America di Muḥyī al-Dīn Bašṭārzī

ANGELA DAIANA LANGONE

This short paper deals with a booklet published by the Algerian playwright Ḥmīda ʿAyyāšī who analyses five pages included in the *Mémoires* by Muḥyī al-Dīn Bašṭārzī, one of the pioneers of the Algerian theatre, that describe the experience of a travel to New York, in the Seventies.

Keywords: Algeria – Arab Theatre – Algerian Theatre – Muḥyī al-Dīn Bašṭārzī – Ḥmīda ʿAyyāšī

«A central figure»,[1] «le principal promoteur»,[2] o ancora «le véritable organisateur du théâtre an Algérie»:[3] così è stato definito Muḥyī al-Dīn Bašṭārzī (Mahieddine Bachetarzi, 1897-1986), uno dei protagonisti del teatro arabo.

Tanto è inscindibile la sua figura dalla storia del teatro arabo che il Teatro Nazionale Algerino, la massima istituzione della quarta arte in Algeria, il 16 aprile 2000[4] è stato ridenominato in suo onore proprio al-Masraḥ al-Waṭanī al-Ǧazāʾirī Muḥyī al-Dīn Bašṭārzī.

Le sue *Mémoires*[5] rappresentano una testimonianza preziosissima che inaugura l'atto fondatore della storia nazionale del teatro

[1] Beaujon 2020, 97.

[2] Landau 1965, 94.

[3] Cheniki 2002, 160.

[4] La data esatta viene menzionata nella versione araba del sito del TNA: https://www.tna.dz/

[5] Bachetarzi 1968, 1984 e 1986.

algerino e dell'autobiografia.[6] Molti studi, non necessariamente circoscritti al genere teatrale,[7] fondano i propri presupposti sulle memorie di Bašṭārzī, che assurgono a fonte primaria in grado di restituire con vividezza un periodo cruciale della storia del Novecento in Algeria.

Sulle *Mémoires* ha lavorato di recente un altro drammaturgo e critico teatrale algerino, Ḥmīda ʿAyyāšī (1958-),[8] con la pubblicazione di un saggio conciso ma piuttosto originale, dal titolo *Bašṭārzī fī Amrīkā, al-riḥla al-mutaʾaḫḫira* (Bachetarzi in America, un viaggio tardivo).[9] Ancora privo di qualsiasi traduzione tanto in italiano quanto in altre lingue europee, questo libretto si propone di indagare l'implicito e le omissioni intenzionali delle *Mémoires* di Bašṭārzī.

È dalle riflessioni di ʿAyyāšī che prende le mosse questo breve contributo.

L'ambiguo, l'incompleto, l'allusivo compaiono in tutta la traiettoria artistica di Bašṭārzī, fin dagli esordi, soprattutto nel suo teatro. Lo stile delle sue pièce è spesso allegorico, carico di immagini e giochi di parole, colmo di allusioni e omissioni. D'altra parte, durante il dominio coloniale, i testi teatrali dovevano essere obbligatoriamente sottoposti al vaglio delle autorità prima di essere rappresentati, fatto salvo che, una volta sul palcoscenico, gli attori avrebbero potuto comunque infilare qualche battuta imprevista suscettibile di far venir meno una parte delle cautele iniziali.

[6] Per Miliani, l'edizione del 1968 delle *Mémoires* « signera l'acte de constitution de l'histoire de la tradition théâtrale en Algérie » (Miliani 2008, 73).

[7] Si vedano ad esempio le *Mémoires* come fonti per ricostruire la storia dei rapporti tra ebrei e musulmani nell'Algeria coloniale (come Katz 2015; Seroussi 2016), la storia della radio (Scales 2016) e la storia della musica araba (Elsner, Jähnichen 1991).

[8] Nato a Makedra, nella *wilāya* di Sidi Bel Abbès, si è laureato in Scienze Politiche all'Università di Algeri. A soli diciassette anni, collabora con Kateb Yacine, allora direttore del teatro di Sidi Bel Abbès. Ḥmīda ʿAyyāšī ha tradotto dal francese all'arabo diverse pièce di Yacine da cui è stato particolarmente influenzato. È autore di numerosi romanzi, opere teatrali e saggi politici nonché caporedattore dei giornali *al-Ḥadaṯ* e *al-Ǧazāʾir News*. È stato consigliere del Ministero della Cultura algerino.

[9] ʿAyyašī 2023.

Prendiamo, a mo' di esempio, la pièce *ʿAlā l-nīf* (Per orgoglio) del 1934, che ruota attorno alla questione dei matrimoni misti, nella fattispecie all'unione fra una giovane francese e un cantante algerino.[10] Per questa commedia, Bašṭārzī viene tacciato di "assimilazionismo",[11] perché il testo descriverebbe un amore idilliaco fra due personaggi che non sarebbero altro che la personificazione dei rispettivi paesi. Ma, a ben notare, il rapporto di coppia sembra piuttosto segnato da incomprensioni e dissapori: ecco che il drammaturgo sembra aver piuttosto inteso usare il tormentato rapporto dei due protagonisti come ovvia metafora dell'incomunicabilità delle civiltà francese e araba.[12]

Quest'ultima, in effetti, è la lettura che ne forniscono le autorità coloniali sospettando un coinvolgimento di Bašṭārzī nel nazionalismo algerino e facendogli pertanto annullare la *tournée*.[13] Del resto, pièce come *Banī Oui oui* (I signorsì) del 1935 e, in special modo, *al-Ḫaddāʿīn* (Gli imbroglioni, o I traditori) del 1937, chiamano in causa non solo le autorità coloniali,[14] ma anche i collaborazionisti, i conniventi, i fanatici, gli arrivisti, gli ipocriti che non indugiano a ingannare i propri compatrioti servendosi anche della religione come paravento. In particolare, *al-Ḫaddāʿīn* viene interdetta in diverse località e l'autore viene costretto a

[10] È un elemento chiaramente autobiografico. Bašṭārzī, infatti, inizia la sua carriera teatrale nel 1933, ma precedentemente era stato tenore. Era un *ḥazzāb* (lettore del Corano) che il mufti di Algeri invitò a servire come muezzin per al-Ǧāmiʿ al-Ǧadīd, una delle moschee più importanti della capitale. Il suo talento fu poi scoperto dal musicista ebreo algerino Edmond Nathan Yafil (1874-1928) che lo introdusse alla carriera musicale profana.

[11] Ruocco 2010, 120.

[12] Beaujon 2020, 98.

[13] L'Étoile nord-africaine (Naǧm Šimāl Ifrīqiyā) è un'associazione che milita per l'indipendenza dell'Algeria, fondata a Parigi già nel 1926. Lo stesso Bašṭārzī ammetterà poi che i proventi di *ʿAlā l-nīf* andavano a rimpinguare le casse dell'Étoile nord-africaine (Bachetarzi 1968, 222).

[14] In un articolo del titolo eloquente "L'action antifrançaise en Algérie" pubblicato il 30 aprile 1937 da *Le Petit Oranais* viene riportata la trama di *al-Ḫaddāʿīn* con le sottolineature in grassetto dei passaggi più critici (ad esempio la semplice espressione "l'unione fa la forza" e brani considerati allusivi come «ils nous ont pris nos enfants, ils nous ont pris nos terrains et ne nous ont laissés qu'une mandoline seulement…»). Bašṭārzī viene accusato di «langage séditieux» e la sua pièce di «propos antifrançais d'acteurs indigènes» (Vérax 1937, 1).

sostituirla con un'altra commedia del suo repertorio, *Zawāǧ bi-l-hātif/ Mariage par téléphone* (Matrimonio per telefono) del 1936 e composta sia in *dāriǧa* che in francese:[15] quest'ultima pièce è una critica ai matrimoni combinati, argomento non meno delicato perché, insieme ad almeno un altro paio di commedie di Bašṭārzī, come *Ḥubb al-nisāʾ* (L'amore delle donne) del 1936 e *al-Nisāʾ* (Le donne) del 1937, è in grado di urtare la suscettibilità degli ambienti più conservatori tenacemente ostili alla partecipazione femminile al teatro, ritenuta inammissibile, riprovevole, pericolosa.[16]

Di quel periodo, Bašṭārzī ricorderà nell'*incipit* alle *Mémoires*:

> Je ne discute pas mes juges. Le lecteur les jugera lui-même. Il fera le tri entre les quelques amis, plutôt rares, que nous avions dans la presse française et les racistes, ou, au mieux, les paternalistes, qui régnaient sur la plupart des journaux. Et parmi les musulmans, peu nombreux dans la presse à cette époque, entre les rétrogrades que notre profession de théâtre choquait, et les nationalistes qui voulaient nous forcer à prendre des positions qui auraient entraîné notre interdiction immédiate.[17]

Sorprendentemente, Ḥmīda ʿAyyāšī decide di limitare la propria indagine alle falle del racconto di Bašṭārzī, grandi, grandissime o minime che siano, non già del periodo coloniale sopra citato, quanto del periodo post-Indipendenza. La sua attenzione si attarda pertanto sull'ultimo periodo della vita di Bašṭārzī, e unicamente su circa cinque pagine delle *Mémoires*[18] in cui il pioniere del teatro algerino ripercorre il viaggio compiuto negli

[15] Come riportato da Bouzar-Kasbadji (1992, 175).

[16] Fino agli anni Venti del Novecento, i ruoli femminili erano interpretati da uomini. La prima donna algerina a calcare le scene sarà l'ebrea Maryam Sūsān (1895-1977), nota come Marie Soussan, cui seguirà ʿĀʾiša ʿAǧūrī (1916-2010), nota come Keltoum (Kalṯūm), scoperta da Bašṭārzī nel 1935. Come riportato in Cheniki 2002, 26, l'organo ufficiale dei marabutti, *al-Balāġ al-ǧazāʾirī* pubblicò un articolo in data 24 febbraio 1932, con cui si scagliava addirittura contro le donne in quanto spettatrici: «tutte soddisfatte – si legge nell'articolo intitolato "Civiltà o abbrutimento" – come se avessero raggiunto il massimo grado di perfezione. Non c'è né pudore, né vergogna, né fede.»

[17] Bachetarzi 1968, 13.

[18] Bachetarzi 1986, 367 e ss.

Stati Uniti nel settembre del 1973, all'età dunque di 76 anni: una *riḥla mutaʾaḫḫira* (viaggio tardivo), così come definita da ʿAyyāšī nel suo saggio.

Quel che interessa al saggista non è tanto la breve descrizione di New York tracciata da Bašṭārzī, quanto i motivi di tale concisione nel suo racconto, soprattutto dal momento che tale viaggio sembra aver rappresento un tassello importante nella sua vita. ʿAyyāšī indaga dunque il "non detto narrativo", la "lacuna",[19] accompagnando il testo oltre la soglia del discorso puramente verbale.

È quindi l'occasione per rievocare al lettore i rapporti tra Algeria e Stati Uniti nei suoi momenti più fulgidi: a partire dal 1795, anno del Trattato di Pace e Amicizia tra il dāy Ḥasan al-Ṭāliṭ Bāšā e il presidente George Washington, passando poi per l'ammirazione nutrita dal presidente Abraham Lincoln per l'emiro ʿAbd al-Qādir (Abdelkader), sino al discorso tenuto, nel luglio 1957, dall'allora giovane senatore John Kennedy che ripudiava la guerra coloniale francese e si schierava in favore dell'indipendenza algerina[20]. Il suo incipit rimane memorabile:

> The most powerful single force in the world today is neither Communism nor Capitalism, neither the H-bomb nor the guided missile. It is man's eternal desire to be free and independent.[21]

Non deve essere quindi una casualità che ʿAyyāšī si soffermi a ricordare il ruolo decisivo svolto dall'Algeria nella liberazione degli ostaggi americani in Iran, con l'accordo firmato ad Algeri il 19 gennaio 1981.

Il saggista inserisce poi la *riḥla* di Bašṭārzī nel solco degli altri (rari) viaggiatori algerini che lo hanno preceduto in America. Il primo a raggiungere New York, secondo la sua ricostruzione,

[19] L'dea di "lacuna" applicata all'arte narrativa è introdotta da Nicola Gardini, secondo cui «non c'è omissione testuale che non rimandi a una pienezza extratestuale: e questa sta al testo come l'ombra al corpo» (Gardini 2014, 5).

[20] Per un'analisi del discorso "Imperialism – The Enemy of Freedom" si rimanda a Lefebvre 1999 e Belabdelouahab-Fernini 2023.

[21] Kennedy 1957.

sarebbe stato il maratoneta Aḥmad Būqarra al-Wāfī (Ahmed Boughèra El Ouafi, 1898-1959), medaglia d'oro alle Olimpiadi del 1928, negli anni in cui l'americano Charlie Chaplin compiva un viaggio in senso opposto, dall'America all'Algeria.[22]

Ma, a fronte dell'esperienza di un atleta algerino sul suolo americano, ʿAyyāšī è costretto anche a riflettere sulla mancanza di partecipazione degli algerini al movimento del cosiddetto *mahǧar*,[23] animato perlopiù da intellettuali di area siro-libanese come, fra i vari, Ǧibrān Ḫalīl Ǧibrān, Mīḫāʾīl Nuʿayma e Amīn al-Rīḥānī.

La prima "scoperta" dell'America da parte algerina, invece, avverrà molto più tardi, ossia nell'ambito di rivendicazioni irriducibilmente politiche, quando nazionalisti del calibro di ʿAbd al-Qādir Šandarlī (Abdelkader Chanderli, 1915-1993) e Muḥammad Yazīd (M'hamed Yazid, 1923-2003), aderenti al FLN (Fronte di Liberazione Nazionale), dovranno recarsi a Washington per presentare il dossier della questione algerina nei corridoi delle Nazioni Unite. Tuttavia, vale senz'altro la pena osservare che nessuno di questi mediatori ha lasciato traccia scritta del suo passaggio in America. Un'America vista, scoperta ed esperita, ma mai narrata, neppure dallo storico algerino Abū l-Qāsim Saʿd Allāh (Abou El Kacem Saadallah, 1930-2013) che pure vi si formò, presso l'Università del Minnesota.

Con queste premesse, diventa quindi palese quanto sia originale il racconto odeporico di Bašṭārzī, al punto che ʿAyyāšī non esita a compararlo nientedimeno che al *Taḫlīṣ al-ibrīz fī talḫīṣ Bārīz* (letteralmente *L'estrazione dell'oro nel compendio di Parigi*, noto in italiano più semplicemente come *L'oro di Parigi*) di Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī (1801-1873), «una delle pietre miliari della modernità letteraria.»[24]

[22] Per la precisione nell'aprile 1931. Il viaggio in Algeria viene descritto in Chaplin 2022.

[23] Con l'espressione *adab al-mahǧar* (letteratura d'emigrazione) si intende un movimento letterario espresso nel Nuovo Continente, tra la fine del XIX e la prima metà del XX secolo, da autori principalmente siro-libanesi. L'America rappresenta «il luogo di arrivo per gli emigrati di tanti Paesi in questa fase storica e nell'immaginario collettivo finisce per essere associata all'idea di una nuova vita, una sorta di ripartenza» (Capezio – Censi 2024, 220).

[24] Paniconi 2013, 197.

Secondo ʿAyyāšī, quello in America non sarebbe semplicemente uno dei tanti spostamenti ai quali Bašṭārzī è avvezzo nel suo regolare vagabondare come uomo di teatro giramondo, ma rappresenterebbe un punto di rottura senza ritorno, un vero e proprio giro di boa.

Nelle settimane di permanenza a New York, infatti, Bašṭārzī ha una sorta di epifania: la sua generazione ha creduto che lo sviluppo e il progresso fossero in Europa – leggasi Francia – quando in realtà, finalmente, la vera essenza del XX secolo diventa tangibile soltanto con gli Stati Uniti.

E, in effetti, diversamente da al-Ṭahṭāwī, evocato poc'anzi, Bašṭārzī non contrappone al paese che sta visitando il proprio, o comunque più in generale, il mondo arabo-islamico, ma piuttosto la Francia. Pur avendola ritenuta sino a quel momento l'espressione più alta della civiltà moderna, non può che rimanere estasiato dal panorama di Manhattan scorto dalla cima dell'Empire State Building che gli appare ben più alto e imponente della Tour Eiffel; definisce Broadway come il "Montmartre di New York" ma con il quintuplo delle sue dimensioni; il Central Park è ai suoi occhi il Bois de Boulogne newyorkese; il Greenwich Village gli sembra di giorno simile alla Place du Vieux Montmartre, vicino al Sacré-Cœur, e di notte una combinazione di Montparnasse, del Quartier Latin e di Saint-Germain-des-Prés.

Con poche pennellate, Bašṭārzī restituisce al suo lettore un'intera metropoli con i suoi orizzonti artistici e culturali, Broadway, le gigantesche avenue delle banche, il luccichio dei negozi d'oro e di gioielli, i musical, le sale cinematografiche, i teatri, la danza, le insegne luminose intermittenti, l'impressionante enormità dei magici grattacieli di Manhattan, menzionando brevemente anche i quartieri di Chinatown e di Harlem. È una metropoli multiculturale che non dorme, frenetica, variopinta, in corsa verso la gloria, la raffinatezza, la felicità.

Eppure, a dispetto dell'entusiasmo delle descrizioni, in definitiva lo spazio che Bašṭārzī dedica al suo racconto di viaggio a New York, posto nell'ultima parte delle sue memorie, è paradossalmente breve, condensato, conciso, caratterizzato da alcune lampanti omissioni.

Ad esempio, rimangono avvolte nel mistero le modalità con cui ha intrapreso il viaggio, dal momento che l'Algeria di Huwārī Bū Madyān (Houari Boumédiène, 1932-1978) aveva interrotto le relazioni diplomatiche con gli Stati Uniti. Bašṭārzī racconta semplicemente di aver ricevuto l'invito a New York per il tramite di tale Mr. Burns, addetto culturale americano, che aveva avuto modo di incontrare al Conservatorio ad Algeri,[25] dove era solito recarsi per esercitarsi a suonare il trombone. Se la letteratura «non è fatta di parole, ma di tutto il silenzio che certe parole scritte lasciano sospettare e inducono a indagare»,[26] ʿAyyāšī riconosce il valore dell'omissione e intende cercarne il senso che, per lui, ha un sapore squisitamente politico, ed è quello sintetizzato qui di seguito.

La ragione di un viaggio narrato sottovoce, quasi in sordina, va rintracciata proprio nei rapporti tra Algeria e Stati Uniti. Con la Guerra dei Sei Giorni del giugno 1967, le relazioni diplomatiche tra i due paesi vengono sospese almeno fino al novembre 1974: in quel lasso temporale, gli interessi americani vengono rappresentati in una sezione dell'ambasciata svizzera di Algeri, mentre l'ambasciata di Guinea a Washington ricopre lo stesso ruolo a favore degli interessi algerini. Il diplomatico che aveva invitato Bašṭārzī a New York, Mr. Burns, si trovava effettivamente a lavorare in un ufficio dell'ambasciata elvetica di Algeri.

L'Algeria mal tollerava la strategia politico-economica americana che conduceva ad attacchi aggressivi contro popoli oppressi, come nel caso del Vietnam, ma anche e soprattutto respingeva l'ingerenza americana nella questione israelo-palestinese.[27]

Il viaggio di Bašṭārzī avviene proprio nel settembre 1973, anno fatale, segnato dalla Guerra del Kippur (6-25 ottobre 1973) e dalla conseguente crisi petrolifera. Ed è sempre nel 1973 che si tiene ad Algeri la Quarta Conferenza dei Capi di Stato e dei Governi dei Paesi non allineati.

[25] Bašṭārzī è stato direttore del Conservatorio municipale di Algeri dal 1966 al 1974.

[26] Gardini 2014, 235.

[27] Roosens 1981.

In un capitolo intitolato *al-Libirāliyya al-makbūta* (Il liberalismo represso), ʿAyyāšī arriva ad accostare Bašṭārzī addirittura a Farḥāt ʿAbbās (Ferhat Abbas, 1899-1985), primo presidente del Governo Provvisorio della Repubblica algerina (dal 19 settembre 1958 al 9 agosto 1961) e a ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Fāris (Abderrahmane Farès, 1911-1991), Presidente dell'Esecutivo provvisorio algerino (nel 1962).

ʿAbbās appartiene alla generazione dei "Jeunes Algériens", il cui pensiero segue un percorso di evoluzione che va dal desiderio di assimilazione alla Francia al nazionalismo algerino,[28] e per tale ragione, proprio come Bašṭārzī, viene guardato con sospetto sia dalla Francia coloniale sia dagli stessi algerini. I suoi avversari, principalmente militanti del Partito del Popolo Algerino (PPA) di Messali Hadj (Maṣālī al-Ḥāǧǧ), gli rimprovereranno spesso i suoi trascorsi in modo da ridimensionare l'autenticità del suo nazionalismo,[29] tanto che ʿAbbās finirà per ritirarsi dalla vita pubblica in seguito al profondo disaccordo con la politica di "sovietizzazione" intrapresa dal primo presidente dell'Algeria, Aḥmad Bin Balla (Ahmed Ben Bella, 1916-2012). Una sorte non troppo dissimile, del resto, tocca anche all'altro grande personaggio evocato da ʿAyyāšī, ossia ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Fāris, emarginato e poi ritiratosi completamente dalla vita politica, ma non senza aver prima trascorso un periodo in carcere per le sue denunce contro la politica autoritaria di Bin Balla.

Di certo, tutti questi avvenimenti non devono aver incoraggiato Bašṭārzī ad annunciare a gran voce e a narrare nel dettaglio il suo soggiorno statunitense, poiché passibile di essere in conflitto con gli orientamenti della politica algerina del tempo. Rimane il fatto che Bašṭārzī è probabilmente l'unico artista algerino ad aver presentato New York, nel periodo d'oro del socialismo e del monopartitismo in Algeria, come un modello positivo di un nuovo stile di vita basato sui valori della differenza e della convivenza pacifica.

[28] Nel 1943, Farḥāt ʿAbbās sottoscrisse il Manifesto del popolo algerino con il quale passava al nazionalismo rigettando definitivamente l'assimilazionismo di cui era stato fervente difensore.

[29] Rahal 2014, 443.

Eppure, l'opinione pubblica algerina non ha mai perdonato a Bašṭārzī questo suo viaggio a New York. Il grande drammaturgo, la cui adesione alla causa nazionale era già stata messa in discussione in precedenza[30] al punto da essere considerato *šaḫṣiyya muṯīra li-l-ǧadal* (figura controversa),[31] avrebbe mantenuto un atteggiamento di prudenza e di cautela.

Secondo l'opinione di ʿAyyāšī, del resto, sarebbe stato estremamente gravoso per Bašṭārzī dedicare più spazio o addirittura un volume intero a un viaggio a New York e poter esprimere la consapevolezza che ormai il Ventesimo secolo «passa attraverso la porta americana, non attraverso quella europea, prima coloniale, né infine attraverso la porta delle democrazie popolari.»[32]

Per concludere, sembra evidente che il lavoro di Ḥmīda ʿAyyāšī costituisca una riflessione significativa, un tassello importante che ha il merito di leggere tra le pieghe di quei silenzi dell'ultima fase di uno dei padri del teatro arabo algerino.

Con tutti i suoi chiaroscuri, le lacune, le reticenze, le inevitabili contraddizioni, Bašṭārzī ha mostrato un'unica convinzione: quella di «non santificare nessuna ideologia, se non l'arte»,[33] proteggendola come si fa con la fiammella di una candela perché non si spenga quando spirano venti sferzanti da ogni dove.

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[30] Soprattutto per aver accettato sovvenzioni dal governo di Vichy. Si vedano in merito Cheniki 2002, 29; Silver 2022, 175. Forse per vergogna, Bašṭārzī non ne farà mai menzione nelle sue *Mémoires*. Secondo ʿAyyašī 2023, 59, lo Stato algerino ripristinò definitivamente la reputazione di Bašṭārzī nel 1992 quando gli conferì, a titolo postumo, l'Ordine nazionale al merito, il *wisām al-ʿašīr*.

[31] ʿAyyašī 2023, 23.

[32] *Yamurru min al-bawwāba al-amrīkiyya wa-laysa min al-bawwāba al-ūrūbbiyya, al-kūlūniyāliyya sābiqan aw min ḫilāl bawwāba al-dīmūqrāṭiyyāt al-šaʿbiyya fī al-aḫīr.*

[33] ʿAyyašī 2023, 56.

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The Hebrew Word List of Arnold von Harff, Jerusalem, 1499

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The present paper discusses a concise Hebrew glossary recorded by the German nobleman, Arnold von Harff, during his stay in Jerusalem from late 1498 to early 1499. The Hebrew material consists of 46 words, 10 phrases and sentences, as well as the numerals 1–20, 100 and 1,000. An examination of the linguistic data reveals a blend of Ashkenazi and Sephardic features, with some influence from European languages. The investigation leads to the conclusion that von Harff's word list reflects an improvised *ad hoc* Hebrew used as an intercommunal and international means of communication between Jews for whom no other common language was available. This kind of Hebrew played an important role among the Jewish communities of Palestine and paved the way for the later emergence of modern Israeli Hebrew.

Keywords: travel literature – Hebrew word list – Ashkenazi and Sephardi traits – European influence – artificial and inter-community language

Our friend and colleague, Riccardo Contini, is an avowed aficionado and learned connoisseur of travel literature. In his studies, he often refers to reports of European travellers to the Middle East, and heartily recommends their writings, not only for private reading pleasure, but also as a source of historical, social and linguistic information.[1] One such traveller is Arnold von Harff

[1] We mention in particular Contini 2010a. The more developed version of this paper promised there in n. 1 appeared (under a different title) in Contini 2010b.

(1471-1505), whom our esteemed *festeggiato* mentions in his article "Richard Francis Burton esploratore delle lingue neosemitiche" (2012), the opening section of which is significantly entitled: "La letteratura di viaggio come fonte di informazioni linguistiche". The lively travel record of von Harff, in addition to being of great interest in itself, is well worth investigation from the linguistic point of view.

1. Arnold von Harff, his book and his travels

In the years 1496-1499 the nobleman Arnold von Harff undertook an extensive journey from Europe to eastern parts, leaving the family seat of his birthplace Harff = Erft (Bedburg) near Cologne in November 1496 and returning three years later in November 1499. Having travelled through Germany and Italy, he sailed from Venice down the Adriatic – via ports on the Istrian, Dalmatian, Albanian and Greek coasts – to Crete and Rhodes and thence to Alexandria. After a detailed inspection of Cairo,[2] he crossed the Sinai Peninsula (including a visit to the monastery of St. Catherine) and in Arabia travelled as far south as Aden and Soqotra. Turning north, he moved to Palestine, Syria, Armenia and Turkey. From here he returned to Europe, travelling through the Balkans, Italy, France, Spain and Brittany, arriving back in Cologne almost exactly three years after he had set out. Whether his oriental excursion also included the Horn of Africa (the source of the Nile and the Mountains of the Moon), Madagascar and India – as he claims – seems somewhat doubtful.[3]

The account which von Harff wrote of his travels was reliably edited long ago by E. von Groote, *Die Pilgerfahrt des Ritters Arnold von Harff, von Cöln durch Italien … in den Jahren 1496 bis 1499 …* (Cöln 1860). This text, written in a Low German dialect, was subsequently translated, with an informative introduction and valuable notes, by M. Letts, *The Pilgrimage of Arnold von Harff …* (London 1946). References in the following pages are to Letts's

[2] Also known as "Babylon(ia)", Letts 1946, 33, 102, 109, 126, 191.
[3] Letts 1946, xvi, xxvii-xxviii, xxxiv, 169 n. 1, 173-174 nn. 1-2, 178 n. 1.

English translation. More recently, the work has been rendered into modern standard German by H. Brall-Tuchel and F. Reichert under the title *Rom – Jerusalem – Santiago. Das Pilgertagebuch des Ritters Arnold von Harff (1496-1498)* (Köln – Weimar – Wien ³2009). This translation is enriched by an introduction, coloured illustrations, bibliography and notes.

Von Harff's account was evidently popular. The edition of von Groote was made from 3 MSS,[4] but many more are either extant or known to have existed. Letts mentions 10 surviving MSS.[5] Subsequent research has increased this number to 12, to which must be added at least 3 more which have been lost.[6]

Arnold von Harff was no ordinary pilgrim, neither in temperament nor itinerary (p. 4). He was a man of many parts, spiritual and worldly, whose curiosity led him to discover and record many out-of-the-way details about the places he visited and the manners and customs of the people he met. For much of his journey he travelled in the company of international merchants (pp. 4, 134, 153, 232), and by this means was able in several of the larger towns to obtain accommodation in the mercantile factories (*fondachi*) of the European trading houses, such as the Fondigo Tudisco in Venice (pp. 50-51) and the Fondigo Venetiarum in Damascus (p. 230). He was also able in this way to make contact with ex-patriot Europeans, some of whom he engaged to perform local services and to act for him as guide and dragoman.

Von Harff seems to have known no modern European language apart from his native German.[7] On one occasion in Italy, however, he tells us that he spoke in Latin (p. 47 – and perhaps also pp. 52, 55). In cases of necessity, when unaccompanied by a dragoman, he would resort to sign language (p. 71). Being a monolingual speaker of German, he was always anxious to seek out his countrymen in order to converse in his mother tongue and to gather local information. He seems to have had little difficulty

[4] Early bibliographical details of von Harff's work are given in Röhricht 1890, 146, 719 and Letts 1946, xiv-xv. The 3 MSS used by von Groote have since been lost.

[5] Letts 1946, xv.

[6] Brall-Tuchel – Reichert 2009, 16.

[7] Letts 1946, xxxi.

in finding fellow Germans en route. There were German students at the university of Bologna (pp. 12, 14); on board ship to Brionia = Brijuni he met two German trumpeters in the service of a wealthy Venetian gentleman (p. 73); in Palestine he found «Jews who live in those parts and know our tongue well» (p. 186) – indeed German Jews were to be found «also in all heathen and Turkish places» (p. 218). In Jerusalem, he was accompanied by a German observant, i.e. a Franciscan monk, born in St. Tron = St. Truyden (pp. 192, 212).

He often mentions these European associates by name: Master Johann Payll in Rome (pp. 15, 20); Herr von Aiche in Ravenna (p. 50); Anthony Paffendorp in Venice (p. 51) and in Modon the master-gunner Peter Bombadere of Ulm (pp. 81, 83). In Cairo he enjoyed the services of the German "Mameluke"[8] Conrad of Basel, accompanied by another Mameluke born in Denmark (pp. 102, 109, 126ff., 182 and Index 318), and in Constantinople on his return journey he met Franck Kassan from Bresberg, a renegade Christian knight in the service of the Sultan Bayezid II (p. 239). The dragoman von Harff engaged in Venice for the onward journey to Egypt, St. Catherine's and Jerusalem was singularly accomplished. This Master Vyncent was a Spaniard, a renegade Christian Mameluke (pp. 69, 93), who «knew many languages such as Latin, Lombard, Spanish, Wendish, Greek, Turkish and excellent Arabic» (p. 69).[9] Presumably, Master Vyncent also knew German, the language in which he would have communicated with his employer.

2. Von Harff's word lists

Despite the restriction of his own linguistic knowledge to German (and, if necessary, Latin), von Harff's wide horizons included matters of language. His interest in different peoples and cultures inspired him to record a little basic vocabulary of some of the

[8] Von Harff's "Mamelukes" are "renegade Christians" from Europe (pp. 92, 102, 115, 154 with further references in the index p. 321).

[9] For Master Vyncent see also the index to Letts 1946, 325, to which perhaps add pp. 154, 193.

languages he encountered on his journeys. He collected his words on the spot from the mouths of speakers out of sheer intellectual curiosity, and added them to his narrative in order to divert his readers with a little authentic local colour.

His short word lists all follow a similar pattern and usually contain the same items, beginning with "bread", "wine" and other practical commodities, followed by a few brief sentences and the elementary numerals. In order of their appearance in his book, he provides such word lists for "Slavonic" = Croatian (pp. 76-77), Albanian (pp. 78-79), Greek (pp. 90-91), Arabic (pp. 129-132), Hebrew (pp. 219-220), Turkish (pp. 244-245), Hungarian (pp. 249-250), Basque (p. 267) and Breton (p. 284).[10] He omitted a word list for French since France bordered upon Germany and, he said, its speech is well known (p. 289).

For a number of these languages (Greek, Arabic, Hebrew) he also provided illustrations (not always original – Letts 1946, xxxii) of their alphabets with the names of the letters. Sometimes, however, only an alphabet is given, without an accompanying word list; this is the case with "Chaldean" = Syriac (p. 150); Ethiopic, which von Harff attributes to the Thomas-Christians of Soqotra (p. 160); Coptic, in use among the "Ethiopians, called Abyssinians or Jacobites" (p. 177)[11] and Armenian (p. 236).

3. Von Harff in Jerusalem

The word lists of von Harff are well worth a closer look, none more so than the short glossary of "Jewish speech" which he recorded in Jerusalem at the very end of the 15th century.

[10] A number of these word lists, some of which are important early witnesses to the languages in question, have been the subject of study. Most of the details can be found in Letts 1946, xxxii and in the notes to the translation in the appropriate places; for further information see the bibliography in Brall-Tuchel – Reichert 2009, 22-25; Contini 2012, 224 n. 7 and for Basque, Considine 2017, 74 n. 6.

[11] Christian "Abyssinians" are also mentioned by von Harff in Arabia Felix. Their belief is as the Syrians and they are said to «speak the Chaldean language» (p. 155).

Our Christian adventurer was in Jerusalem for several weeks at the turn of the years 1498 and 1499. He clearly enjoyed his stay in the Holy City and made the most of his time there. He visited the traditional holy sites in and around the city and studied the several Christian communities within the walls. He was assisted in his activities by various attendants and interpreters, one of whom, a German monk from St. Tron = St. Truyden, not only accompanied him on daily excursions, but also helped him with the writing of his travel book (pp. 192, 212). At a special ceremony following mass and communion in the "Temple of our Lord Jesus", at the very sepulchre itself, von Harff was inducted into the knighthood by Hans of Prussia «in honour of the Holy Sepulchre and the Knight St. George» (p. 202).

The wide scope of von Harff's interests has already been mentioned. He was fired with an inquiring enthusiasm. It has been said of him that «Indeed, his mania for collecting foreign words and phrases was extraordinary.»[12] For such a man, the chance to learn the Hebrew alphabet and record a few words from Jews in Jerusalem was too good to miss. Von Harff tells us the circumstances in which his data were collected. Having arrived in Jerusalem and secured lodgings on Mt. Zion (p. 192), he met three unnamed local German Jews, of whom he says: «I kept company with them often on account of the language and learnt to write the alphabet, and retained also certain words from their daily speech, as they are written here» (p. 218). It stands to reason that from these three Jews he elicited answers to the questions in his word list (very similar versions of which he used throughout his travels) and wrote down the replies from their dictation.[13] He then presents the aforementioned Hebrew alphabet (including the names of the letters) and his word list of "Jewish speech" (*Jutsche spraich*). This "Jewish speech" turns out to be Hebrew. He

[12] Letts 1946, xxxii.

[13] Thus correctly Babinger 1920, p. 72. The impression given by some authors that von Harff casually heard his Hebrew words and sentences live «in the market» (Alloni 1995, 35), «among Hebrew speakers or from the mouth of his friends in Jerusalem» or «in the street» (Haramati 1997, 101-102) seems to me entirely mistaken.

gives 46 single words (nos. 1-46), 10 phrases and sentences (nos. 47-53, nos. 76-78) and the numerals 1-20, 100, 1000 (nos. 54-75). Although von Harff's Hebrew material has been discussed in greater or lesser detail on several occasions,[14] the interest it offers is far from being exhausted.

4. Von Harff's Hebrew alphabet and word list

Here are von Harff's data as given by von Groote 1860, 187-189 = Letts 1946, 218-220:



[14] The most important discussions of von Harff's Hebrew material are those of Babinger 1920, Klausner 1923, Ish-Shalom 1965, 271-275 and Braslavsky 1954, 150-151 (< idem 1936-1937, 69). Brief mentions of the word list (derivative and not always accurate) are given by, e.g., Federbush 1967, 132; Vilnai 1984, col. 252; Alloni 1995, 35; Haramati 1997, 100-102 and Izre'el 2002, 226.

The Hebrew alphabet was first written from right to left in six rows (presented in the wrong sequence) with the names of the letters later added above each. Von Harff's alphabet looks like this:

joth	thech	heth	daen	vau
י	ט	ח	ז	ו
hee	delech[15]	gymel	bath	aleph
ה	ד	ג	ב	א
pe	ayn	samech	nun	nun
פ	ע	ס	ן	נ
men	men	lamed	kaff	kaff
ם	מ	ל	ך	כ
	taff	schyn	resz	kuff
⸗[16]	ת	ש	ר	ק
	zodick	zodick[17]	ffe[18]	
	ץ	צ	ף	

Von Harff's Hebrew alphabet is followed immediately by his record of "Jewish Speech". The material contains words from both

[15] If we correct the misprinted ending of **delech** (below n. 57), it is possible that the transcription points to the pronunciation of the letter as דֶּלֶת "door".

[16] The sign is a mere line-filler.

[17] Rather than *ṣade* etc. with a final vowel, von Harff's text has *zodick*, i.e. the form צד(י)ק which is used in many Jewish languages and is still common, especially in circles of the more traditional kind. The vowel **o** is very likely a misprint for **a** – for other examples of this confusion see below §5. ק has been added to the name of the letter in the wake of BT Shabbat 104a, where the morally upright צַדִּיק is mentioned in connection with the graphic shape of initial/medial צ vs. final ץ. For another explanation, viz. that ק, the following letter in the Hebrew alphabetical sequence, has been agglutinated to צדי by metanalysis, see Maman 2019, 619.

[18] It is worth noting that initial פ is called **pe**, whereas final ף is termed **ffe**. This is the practice in Yiddish, Ladino and other Jewish languages too, the reason being that at the end of a word *p* is practically certain to be spirant *p̄/f*. The principle, however, was not applied to ך/כ, both of which are here named **kaff** (as against Yiddish *xof* = כָּף). In the word list no. 35 כַּף "a spoon" is also written **kaff.**

Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew, as well as a couple of items of Romance origin.

Jutsche spraich.

1.[19]	**lehem**	*broyt*	bread[20]	לחם
2.	**jojen**	*wijn*	wine	יין
3.	**moim**	*wasser*	water	מים
4.	**boissar**	*fleysch*	meat	בשׂר
5.	**befinna**	*keyss*	cheese	גבינה
6.	**betzim**	*eyer*	eggs	ביצים
7.	**hometz**	*essich*	vinegar	חומץ
8.	**semen**	*oelich*	oil	שמן
9.	**tangol**	*eyn hayn*	a cock	תרנגול[21]
10.	**tangoles**	*eyn henn*	a hen	תרנגולת
11.	**daegim**	*visch*	fish(es)	דגים
12.	**meela**	*saltz*	salt	מלח
13.	**toeff**	*guet*	good	טוב
14.	**va**	*boiss*	bad	רע
15.	**onoge**	*ich*	I	אנוכי
16.	**emmes**	*waer*	true/truth	אמת
17.	**kysiff**	*geloegen*	lie(d)	כזב[22]

[19] Ed. von Groote 1860, 188, left twin column.

[20] The English glosses are largely those of Letts < von Harff's German, but here and there small changes have been made.

[21] Although reflexes of this widespread word with reduction of *rng* > *ng* occur in various languages (Western Neo-Aramaic *ṯinaġelča* – Arnold 2019, 843 and several types of German slang, *dannegaul* etc. – Wolf 1956, no. 5760), it may be that we have here just a mishearing or a misprint.

[22] Babinger 1920, 73 suggested the perfect verb "כִּזֵּב. (Pielform)". This seems unlikely. Despite what looks like the past participle *geloegen*, it is probable that we have a nominal form here. But if **kysiff** is a noun, what noun is it? The Biblical vocalization is כָּזָב *kåzåḇ* (> Yiddish *kózev*) – this standard form is strongly implied by the unvocalized כזב of Ish-Shalom 1965, 274, followed by Haramati 1997, 101, but does not match von Harff's vowels. Already in Biblical Hebrew *qåṭål* may interchange with other *mišqalim*, a tendency which increases in the post-Biblical language; see, e.g., Eldar 1978-1979 ii, 90-91; Bar-Asher 2015-2022 ii, 788-789. The entry of our word list may reflect something along the lines of segolate כֶּזֶב*; cf. Yiddish reflexes of the noun כזבּ such as *kezev*, pl. *kzovim* (Weinreich 1968,

18.	**eys**	*eyn man*	a man	איש
19.	**eyscha**	*eyn vrau*	a woman	אישה
20.	**ken**	*jae*	yes	כן
21.	**lo**	*neyn*	no	לא
22.	**eufasa**	*eyn gans*	a goose	אווזה
23.[23]	**offena**	*eyn scyff*	a ship	ספינה
24.	**tzus**	*eyn pert*	a horse	סוס
25.	**mispa**	*voider*	fodder	מספוא
26.	**eusapbum**	*heuwe*	hay	עשׂבים[24]
27.	**deesse**	*grass*	grass	דשא
28.	**tefen**	*stroe*	straw	תבן
29.	**balbaes**	*eyn wirt*	a landlord, host	בעל בית
30.	**beyueren**	*drincken*	to drink	Romance *beber*[25]
31.	**agila**	*essen*	eating	אכילה
32.	**dormen**	*slaeffen*	to sleep[26]	Romance *dormir*
33.	**nero**	*eyn kertz*	a candle	נר[27]
34.	**baeskisse**	*eyn heymlich*	a privy	בית כיסא
35.	**kaff**	*eyn leffel*	a spoon	כף
36.	**karo**	*eyn scottel*	a dish	קערה

582). Another Yiddish nominal form derived from this root is pronounced קיזעוו, i.e. *kizev* (Perferkovitch 1931, 115a, s.v. כזב). In the dictionary of Weinreich, p. 582 this pronunciation appears under the spelling כיזוב (*kizev*, pl. *kizuvim*). Cf. *Kisev* in Wolf 1956, no. 2636. Perhaps von Harff's **kyssif** belongs here.

[23] Ed. von Groote 1860, 188, right twin column.

[24] In rabbinic sources this word occurs predominantly in the plural (Krauss 1910-1912 ii, 185, 570 n. 236). It is not clear whether von Harff intended עֶשְׂבִּים or עֲשָׂבִים – both vocalizations are attested.

[25] For the Romance elements in the word list see below §§5, 7.

[26] But for *slaeffen* in the erotic sense "to lie (with s.o.)" it is שכ״ב that is used (no. 52).

[27] Rather than posit an unattested *nomen unitatis* *נֵרָה, it seems better to delete the final **-o** of **nero** – thus Klausner 1923, 115 and others. Against von Harff's explicitly sg. gloss, Babinger 1920, 73 suggested the pl. נֵרוֹת "candles".

37.	**measlaufen**	*wijsgelt*	white money	מָעוֹת לָבָן[28]
38.	**schagofim**	*eyn gulden*	a gulden	זה(ו)בים[29]
39.	**edonai**	*got*	God	אדנָי
40.	**elohin**	*der here*[30]	the Lord	אלהים
41.	**zatan**	*der duuel*	the devil	שׂטן
42.	**malach**	*eyn engel*	an angel	מלאך
43.	**kiszones**	*eyn hempt*	a shirt	כתונת[31]

[28] Von Harff's *wijsgelt* = *Weissgeld* (better known as *Weisspfennig*) "white money", indicates regular day-to-day silver currency or small change (as opposed to gold coins used for trade and larger business operations). Both in derivation and usage, it corresponds to the Ottoman *akçe* (< *ak* "white"). The meaning of the term, which also occurs in the word lists for Albanian and Greek, is made quite clear by von Harff himself at the very end of his book (p. 307 = ed. von Groote 1860, 260), where he mentions "white money" *wijsgelt* (alternating with the synonymous "silver money" *siluer muntz*) in contrast to gold. The same contrast appears in other glossaries too.

The term *Weissgeld* has various equivalents in German thieves' cant, beggars' argot etc.: *Weißfuchs, Weißling, weisse ~ blanke Asche, weißes Meger* (Wolf 1956, nos. 6202, 6208, 142, 3506). Based upon Hebrew לָבָן "white" we find *Lohwen ~ Loben* "Weißpfennig" and *Kesuv-Lowi* "Silbergeld" (*ibid.*, nos. 2578 and 3293); cf. "*lowon* … silbern" – Avé-Lallemant 1862, 568. The first element of our **measlaufen**, viz. Hebrew מָעוֹת, appears as the second component of Rotwelsch *Weißmoß ~ Weißmoos* (no. 6202). The formally pl. מעות is here used as a sg. (as it is in Yiddish: דאָס מעות *dos moes* "the cash"); the adjective "white" is accordingly not pl. לְבָנוֹת* as it would be in full Hebrew, but sg. לָבָן. The Biblical מעות (pl. of מָעָה "a grain") in its post-Biblical meaning "coins, money" is used in many Jewish languages and lives on in unofficial German as *Moos*: Avé-Lallemant 1862, 575-576 and for the Yiddish cf. *ibid.*, 405; Röhrich 2003 ii, 1049 s.v.

The interpretation of Babinger 1920, 74 of **measlaufen** as "etwa מאת אלפים d.i. 100.000?" is very wide of the mark, and all the more curious because he himself refers in his footnote to Zunz's mention of Hebrew לבן as the designation of the *Weisspfennig*. No better is מאות אלפים "hundreds of thousands" of Ish-Shalom 1965, 274 n. 8.

[29] Despite the odd spelling, **schagofim** represents זה(ו)בים and against the translation is plural; cf. the sg. **zahaff** no. 53.

[30] The glosses for nos. 39 and 40 had rather be the other way round.

[31] Biblical Hebrew shows the alternation *st. abs.* כֻּתֹּנֶת (with geminated, plosive *tt*) vs. *st. cstr.* כְּתֹנֶת (with ungeminated, spirant *t/θ*). Post-Biblical Hebrew consistently prefers the latter in all syntactic situations: Yeivin 1985 ii, 975 n. 46; Bar-Asher 2015-2022 ii, 1174. It is this latter form, without *dagesh* and with spirant

44.	**ferrohatz**	*wesschen*	to wash	רח״ץ[32]
45.[33]	**maritz**	*dat backhuyss*	the bakehouse	מרחץ[34]
46.[35]	**hillich**	*gayn*	to go	הל״ך[36]
47.	**kamme tetim ly**	*wie wiltu mir dat geuen*	How much will you give me?	כמה תיתן לי
48.	**anoge etten lachae**[37] **cambi**[38]	*ich wil also vil geuen*[39]	I will give you so much	אנוכי אתן לך...

ת that appears in our word list. Cf. Yiddish *Kessones* and Gaunersprache *Kesones* in Avé-Lallemant 1862, 393 and 557.

[32] The precise form of רח״ץ "to wash" intended is not clear. Babinger 1920, 74 proposed, tentatively, וְרָחַץ, i.e. "and he bathed"; similarly, Ish-Shalom 1965, 274. Beider 2015, 265, 346 suggests that the word is a direct reflection of one of the Pentateuchal occurrences of וְרָחַץ. Cf. "*Rochaz*, er hat gewaschen" in Avé-Lallemant 1862, 456.

[33] Ed. von Groote 1860, 189, left twin column.

[34] The gloss "the bakehouse" does not obviously match the entry **maritz**. Since the latter, coming immediately after "to wash", in all likelihood represents מֶרְחָץ "bathhouse" (Yiddish *mérkhets*), von Harff's *dat backhuyss* will be a copyist's/printer's error for an equivalent of *Badehaus*; thus Babinger 1920, 74 and similarly Ish-Shalom 1965, 274 n. 9. Neither "bakehouse" nor "bathhouse" occurs elsewhere in the word lists. It is possible that the entries nos. 44 and 45 **ferrohatz** and **maritz** are a conflation of the verb רח״ץ and the noun בית מרחץ.

[35] Ed. von Groote 1860, 189, right twin column.

[36] Derivatives of הל״ך "to go" occur in various Jewish languages (Avé-Lallemant 1862, 358-359, 547; Maman 2019, 209-210, 406). Which exact form of the root is intended here is not clear. Babinger 1920, 74 understood perfect *pi^{cc}el* הִלֵּךְ, whereas Ish-Shalom 1965, 274 preferred the participle *qal* הולך.

[37] Here and in nos. 52, 53 the pronominal suffixes referring to the 2nd fem. sg. have the masc. form, i.e. **lachae**/**lagae** = לָךְ and **eitzelga** = אצלָךְ instead of fem. לָךְ and אצלֵךְ. This is clearly a European influence (below §5).

[38] For **cambi** Stumme 1914, 129 n. 2 proposed Italian *cambio*, but did not say in what sense. Babinger 1920, 74 understood כַּמָּה: "ich gebe dir wieviel" (cf. **kamme** = כמה no. 47) while Ish-Shalom 1965, 274 preferred ככה "thus, such and such". Could **cambi** be a garbled representation of הַרְבֵּה "much"? The expression *also vil* does not occur in the other word lists.

[39] "To you" has fallen out of the German gloss.

49.	**ma schemo**	*wat is sijn name*	What is his/its name?	מה שמו
50.		eyn fraige:	A question:	
	jehuede atta?	*bys du eyn jude?*	Are you a Jew?	יהודי אתה
51.		ander:	(Answer of the?) other:	
	ken dibarta	*du haist gesacht.*	Correctly you have spoken.	כן דיברת
52.	**plonosa anoge tzogeff**	*vrauwe laist mich dese nacht bij uch slaeffen.*	Lady, I lie with you this night.	[40]פלוניתא אנוכי שוכב

[40] The form underlying **plonosa** is not clear. Klausner 1923, 115; Ish-Shalom 1965, 274 and Haramati 1997, 102 simply give Hebrew פלונית without comment; Alloni 1995, 35 has masculine פלוני. Considerable variety obtains in the inflection of the word for "so-and-so": Hebrew has m. פְּלוֹנִי and f. פְּלוֹנִית as against Aramaic m. פְּלָנִי ~ פְּלָן and f. פְּלָנִית (indef.); m. פְּלָנְיָא and f. פְּלָנִיתָא (def.); cf. Bar-Asher 2015-2022 iii, 454-457. If Aramaic פְּלָנִיתָא lies behind von Harff's entry, the first **o** of **plonosa** could perhaps be accounted as Ashkenazi pronunciation of the *qamaṣ* (*ā* > *o*). Considering, however, the number of **a**/**o** printing errors in the text and in the absence of convincing cases of *qamaṣ* marked by **o** (see below §5), this interpretation is doubtful. Another possibility would be to take this first **o** as reflecting primary *o*, viz. the *ḥolam* of the Hebrew equivalent פלונית. There exists in the sources a hybrid Hebrew-Aramaic variant of the f. form, which combines the *o* vowel of Hebrew פלונית with the *st. emph.* ending of Aramaic פלנתָא, viz. פְּלוֹנִיתָא: Sokoloff 2020, 885b. This form is taken for granted by Babinger 1920, 74, but does not in fact occur in the source (Levy) to which he refers; it is also given by Beider 2015, 273, 331 n. 381. It might be that this hybrid פְּלוֹנִיתָא is reflected here. But whatever view we take of the first **o** of **plonosa** (פְּלָנִיתָא or פלונית), the second **o** remains difficult and must surely be accounted a misprint for **i**.

	eitzelga[41] **see**				אצלךְ זה[43]
	halegla[42]				הלילה
53.	**Anoge etten**	*ich wil dir eynen*		I will give you a	אנוכי אתן לךְ
	lagae zahaff	*gulden geuen.*		gulden.	זה(ו)ב[44]
54.	**ehat**	אֶחָד	65.	**scuim aschar**	שנים עשׂר
55.	**senaim**[45]	שניים	66.	**scloissa aschar**	שלושה עשׂר
56.	**scloissa**[46]	[47]שלושה	67.	**harba aschar**	ארבעה עשׂר
57.	**harba**	ארבעה	68.	**hemmissa aschar**	חמישה עשׂר
58.	**hemmissa**	חמישה	69.	**schessa aschar**	שישה עשׂר
59.	**schessa**	שישה	70.	**scheua aschar**	שבעה עשׂר
60.	**scheua**	שבעה	71.	**schemona aschar**	שמונה עשׂר
61.	**schemona**	שמונה	72.	**tischa aschar**	תשעה עשׂר
62.	**tischa**	תשעה	73.	**escherim**	עשׂרים
63.	**aschara**	עשׂרה	74.	**mea**	מאה
64.	**ahat aschar**	אַחַד עשׂר	75.	**eleff**	אלף

[41] For the masc. suffix here and in no. 53 see below §5.

[42] This is not an innocent enquiry to a landlady after overnight lodgings in an inn but a request for sexual services. This is made perfectly clear by similar entries in the word lists for Croatian, Greek, Arabic and Basque; for example, the latter has von Harff's «universal chat-up line» (Considine 2017, 74) in the form: «Beautiful maiden, come and sleep with me» (p. 267). Klausner 1923, 115 found in this Hebrew entry evidence of the degraded moral level of Jerusalem Jewry; others have gone further and suggested the existence of Hebrew-speaking prostitutes in the Holy City (Shur 1979, 349). The sentence, however, tells us far more about the predilections of the visitor von Harff than about the morals of the local Jew(esse)s.

[43] The sequence demonstrative + noun in **see halegla** may be safely ascribed to European influence (below §5).

[44] The spelling **zahaff** looks like = זָהָב (thus, e.g., Ish-Shalom 1965, 274 and cf. "*Sohof* … der Gulden" – Avé-Lallemant 1862, 609), but could also be = זָהוּב. The word is the sg. of **schagofim** (no. 38). It is possible that a reflex of זָהָב served as the singular, whereas the plural harked back to זְהוּבִים; this is the case among the Jews of Algiers (Cohen 1912, 406).

[45] A misprint for ***scnaim** (cf. the next entry **scloissa**)?

[46] Or perhaps read ***seloissa** (cf. the preceding **senaim**)?

[47] Babinger 1920, 74 inexplicably sometimes gives the numbers 3-10 with the ending *-ā* (as von Harff wrote and intended), sometimes without.

76.	**toeff boker**	*guden morgen*	Good morning	טוב בוקר[48]
77.	**toeff laila**	*gude naicht*	Good night	טוב לילה
78.	**schim emagem**	*got sij mit vch*	God (be) with you	שֵם עִמָכם

5. The language of the word list

Before discussion of the wider implications of von Harff's text, a few words must be said about its language. In old glossaries of this type, the data are often garbled, sometimes to the extent of complete opacity. This is not at all surprising: the authors themselves may not have identified the foreign sounds properly in the first place[49] and were frequently uncertain how to represent them in Latin letters; their copyists had no means of ascertaining the correct readings and easily made a hash of their work; to the typesetters the material was incomprehensible and since it was equally incomprehensible to most of the readership, little attempt was made to ensure accuracy. These problems attend many similar works and von Harff's word list is no exception. Despite, however, the vagaries of the transcriptions and the erratic typesetting, most of van Harff's Hebrew items can be safely identified.

Transcription

Irregular transcriptions and plain printing errors are already evident in the names of the Hebrew letters. For example, it is unlikely that the names for ח = **heth** and ט = **thech** really ended in different sounds or that **delech** = ד and **daen** = ז were both pronounced with initial [d]. The situation is no better in the word list itself, where (quite apart from a good many apparently technical mishaps, e.g. **befinna** (5), **va** (14) **offena** (23), **tetim** (47) with erroneous final **-m** vs. **etten** (48) with correct final **-n**), the phonetic aspects of the material are presented in a very haphazard fashion.

[48] For the non-Hebrew word order of nos. 76 and 77 see below §5.
[49] cf. Letts 1946, xxxii.

What one supposes to be the same sound may be represented by different letters, and, conversely, a single letter may indicate different sounds. A few examples will suffice.

The velar fricative [x] is spelled with **ch**, **g** or **h**: **lachae** (48) ~ **lagae** (53), **hometz** (7). The letter **g** may represent [g], [h], [x] or [y]: **tangol** (9), **schagofim** (38), **agila** (31), **halegla** (52) ~ **laila** (77).

The marking of the sibilants is particularly chaotic. Hebrew *zayin* [z] appears as **d**, **s**, **sch** or **z**: **daen** (alphabet), **kysiff** (17), **eufasa** (22), **schagofim** (38), **zahaff** (53). The sound one imagines to be [s], whether representing ס,שׂ or ת, is written as **s**, **ss**, **tz**, **sz** or **z**: **samech** (alphabet), **eusabum** (26), **emmes** (16), **boissar** (4), **tzus** (24), **kiszones** (43), **zatan** (41).[50] In **kiszones** two different spellings occur in the same word. The consistent marking of [s] by **sch** in the numerals 10-20: **aschara**, **aschar**, **escherim** (63-73) is very odd.[51] The marking of *šin* [š] shows similar variation, being represented by **s**, **sc**/**se**, **sch**, **ss**, **sz** and **tz**: **semen** (8), **eys** (18), **scloissa** (56), **senaim** (55), **schyn** (alphabet), **schessa** (59), **eyscha** (19), **deesse** (27), **resz** (alphabet), **tzogeff** (52). In **scloissa** = שְׁלוֹשָׁה "three" and **schessa** = שִׁשָּׁה "six" the sound [š] is written in different ways in a single word.

Ashkenazi vs. Sephardi

An important question is the location of von Harff's material within the pronunciation tradition of Hebrew, in particular its relation to the great Ashkenazi : Sephardi divide.

The Hebrew words were provided by German Jews to a German fellow countryman. Words such as **tangol** (9, with note ad loc.),

[50] For the interpretation of **tzus** and **zatan** as marking affricate [ts] in initial position, see Beider 2015, 257.

[51] This marking of *śin* = שׂ by **sch** can hardly represent [š]. It is probably an error induced by the preceding numerals **schemona**, **tischa** (61, 62) etc. and then carried through. Any thought of Samaritan or Arabic influence would be very far-fetched.

balbaes (29),[52] **agila** (31),[53] **baeskisse** (34),[54] **kaff** (35)[55] and **measlaufen** (37, with note ad loc.) may well have already formed an integral, natural part of the Jewish German ("Yiddish") which von Harff's informants spoke among themselves and which they may have brought with them from Germany. In the circumstances, it is natural to think that von Harff's list should reflect Ashkenazi pronunciation.[56] This is partly true.

In the realm of consonants, the Ashkenazi *shibboleth* pronunciation of spirant תּ (*taw rafa*) as sibilant [s] is indeed very well represented. In fact, in the word list,[57] there are no exceptions, the result being consistently marked by **s**: **tangoles** (10), **emmes** (16), **balbaes** (29), **baeskisse** (34), **measlaufen** (37), **plonosa** (52). In **kiszones** = כתּונתּ "a shirt" (43) the first תּ is written **sz**.

In the realm of vowels, however, indications of Ashkenazi pronunciation are not nearly so clear. Identification of the hallmark Ashkenazi shift *ā/å* (*qamaṣ*) > *o* is vitiated by a large number of confusions and inconsistencies between **a** and **o**, e.g., אָנוכי "I" is spelled both **onoge** (15) and **anoge** (48, 52, 53).[58] There are cases of **a** where we might have expected **o**: **mispa** (25) and inversely cases of **o** for expected **a**: **zodick** (alphabet), **jojen** (2), **moim** (3).[59] According to Babinger, p. 72, Hebrew *a* is normally ("in der Regel") transcribed by von Harff as **o**. This remark

[52] Avé-Lallemant 1862, 342, 521; Wolf 1956, no. 254.

[53] In addition to Yiddish אָבלעך ,אָבילה etc. see the many variants in substandard German slang recorded in Avé-Lallemant 1862, 516 (and for Yiddish, *ibid.* 328); Wolf 1956, no. 30.

[54] Avé-Lallemant 1862, 341 and cf. *ibid.*, 524; Wolf 1956, no. 431.

[55] Avé-Lallemant 1862, 391-392, 553; Wolf 1956, no. 2402.

[56] This is perhaps what is intended by the mention of Ashkenazi pronunciation by Braslavsky 1954, 151 (< idem 1936-1937, 69).

[57] As opposed to the alphabet, where we find **th**: **bath**, **heth**. The final **-ch** of **delech** and **tech** should probably be corrected accordingly. **joth** may belong here, too. The names of the letters of the alphabet perhaps derive from a different source or reflect a different tradition; cf. Weinreich 1965 (< idem 1959-1961) 39 §78, 46 §104.

[58] For inconsistencies in von Harff's renderings of Hebrew *qamaṣ*, see Beider 2015, 290 n. 226.

[59] These hardly reflect pausal forms: יָיִן* and מָיִם*. For these two words cf. Beider 2015, 307.

arouses expectations of the Ashkenazi *ā* > *o* shift. The intention, however, is very unclear – perhaps he is just referring to (sporadic) cases such as the aforementioned **moim** = מַיִם (*pataḥ*). Whatever is meant, there seem to be no secure cases of von Harff's **o** reflecting Ashkenazi *qamaṣ*. Leaving aside the problematic **schagofim** (38), **ferrohatz** (44) and **plonosa** (52), the only possible instance appears to be **karo** = קעָרָה "a dish" (36 – Avé-Lallemant 1862, 449: *Káaro* ; Wolf 1956, no. 2418 "Kahre"), but this is highly suspect of being a **a**/**o** misprint for ***kara**, with final **-a**, the spelling of every other case of the feminine ending. There do, nevertheless, exist a few hints of the backing of *qamaṣ* in the direction of *o*. The clearest of these is **measlaufen** = מעוֹת לָבָן "white money" (37). Perhaps **boissar** = בָּשָׂר "meat" (4) can also be interpreted in this way.[60]

While evidence of the Ashkenazi vowel shift is marginal or tenuous, the pronunciation of Hebrew *qamaṣ* as *a* in Sephardi fashion is plain to see, both in the alphabet and in the word list: **lamed**, **samech** (alphabet), **eusapbum** (26), **edonai** (39), **zatan** (41), **atta** (50), **zahaff** (53), **mea** (74). The spelling **daegim** (11) also belongs here.[61]

No consistent, uniform Hebrew pronunciation tradition emerges from von Harff's material. It is neither Ashkenazi nor Sephardi; it is a hybrid, an inconsistent hybrid. A blatant Ashkenazi trait, such as תּ realized as sibilant [s], exists here side by side with the Sephardi pronunciation of *qamaṣ* as [a]. The two coexisting traditions may be contrasted by comparing **[meas]laufen** (37) with **zatan** (41). These words, לָבָן and שָׂטָן respectively, share the same noun pattern. In a self-contained, uniform tradition of Hebrew pronunciation, one would expect them to yield similar results. But here it is not so. The spelling **laufen** reflects something along the lines of Ashkenazi/Yiddish *lóvn*, whereas **zatan** shows the vowels and structure of Sephardi *satán* (as against Ashkenazi/Yiddish *sótn*).

[60] cf. Avé-Lallemant 1862, 526: *Bossor*.

[61] Haramati 1997, 101 and 114 n. 74 saw a Sephardi feature in the pronunciation of initial shewa in **ma schemo** (49).

European calques

The material contains a number of certain or very probable calques of European languages. Klausner, p. 115, had already noted that **toeff boker** "Good morning!" (76) and **toeff laila** "Good night!" (77) were likely to be translations from a foreign language, e.g. German. These adjective + noun combinations show European, not Hebrew word order and correspond to the sequence of von Harff's *guden morgen* and *gude naicht* respectively. Klausner attributed this to the non-Hebrew, i.e. international and cosmopolitan, influence to which the Jews of Jerusalem of the time were naturally exposed.

Although combinations such as זה הלילה "this night", with preposed demonstrative, do occur marginally in Hebrew (and are possibly even Biblical), the word order of von Harff's **see halegla** "this night, tonight" (52) is decidedly against normal Hebrew idiom. The only circumstances in which this sequence is usual in Hebrew are those of the Arabic > Hebrew translations of the Middle Ages.[62] In the present case of Hebrew in an Arabic-speaking environment, one could – at a pinch (and with a fair measure of special pleading) – regard von Harff's **see halegla** as a Hebrew transfer of Arabic هذه الليلة. It seems much more reasonable, however, to see here a calque of a European equivalent, such as von Harff's gloss: *dese nacht.*

Another case of European influence is to be seen in the lack of gender distinction in the pronominal suffixes of the 2nd person singular. Nos. 52 and 53 are addressed to a female, but the suffixes of **eitzelga** and **lagae** are masculine, i.e. formally they reflect אצלְךָ and לְךָ respectively. This negligence of gender has no precedent in Hebrew, and there is nothing like it in Palestinian Arabic. On the other hand, in European languages, it is perfectly normal.

[62] Rabin 2000, 97-99; Goshen-Gottstein 2006, 155.

Romance words

A highly interesting and significant feature of von Harff's word list of "Jewish speech" is the fact that it includes two items which are not Hebrew at all: **beyueren** "to drink" (30) and **dormen** to "to sleep" (32). These words are of Romance origin (cf. Spanish *beber* and *dormir*, Italian *bevere* and *dormire*), and their presence in our Hebrew word list is very striking. If **cambi** (48) really represents Italian *cambio*, it must be added to the inventory of Romance words.

6. The word list represents spoken Hebrew

This, then, is the material aspect of von Harff's Hebrew word list, i.e. its contents and its language. What are we to make of it? What purpose did it serve? What does it represent?

Various assessments (some of them rather unclear) have been offered. Thus, according to Babinger (1920, 72, where no source is indicated), R. Hildebrand apparently thought that the word list served some secret purpose, viz., since the Jews of Jerusalem supposedly all understood German, Hebrew was needed as a cryptic alternative. Babinger himself (*ibid.*) refers to the language of our word list as «das gewöhnliche Jüdisch, durchsetzt mit ladinischen Ausdrücken». The import of the second part of this definition is clear enough, but what is meant by «das gewöhnliche Jüdisch» does not emerge at all – the "usual Jewish" mixture of languages? "Normal" Hebrew usage? Or perhaps by using the term "Jüdisch" (as against the "hebräisch" of his title) Babinger is referring to "Yiddish"? If so, the reference will be (not very convincingly) to the Hebrew component of Yiddish. Such brief, unsubstantiated characterizations of von Harff's material do not contribute very much.

The only detailed, informed discussion of the implications of von Harff's word list seems to be that of Y. Klausner in a Hebrew article of 1923. Klausner very rightly stressed the practical, day-to-day nature of the contents of the word list. This is not learned Hebrew taken from old books, but a record of basic daily commodities, bodily functions, useful sentences, etc. from real

life. The items mentioned belong to the market place and the home, not to the school or synagogue. In this, they match, rather exactly, the contents and character of von Harff's other word lists, all of which are severely utilitarian. Indeed, von Harff's general intention in writing his book was to provide a practical guide for pilgrims and travellers.[63] Accordingly, he does not at all restrict himself to descriptions of the holy sites and the liturgical etc. practices observed at each, but also gives recommendations about provisions to be taken on the journey, details of the distances between towns, advice on how to deal with foreign officialdom, etc. In keeping with this practical aim, he adds information about the habits and practices of the locals, including lists of basic vocabulary. From this, Klausner concluded, surely correctly, that von Harff's Hebrew data were not just items written in an abstract word list, but were actually used, i.e. spoken, heard and understood, in daily Jerusalem life. This was living, functional Hebrew.

Word lists vs. alphabets

The manner in which von Harff disposes his various materials further supports the view that we have here Hebrew which was actually spoken and used. He presents his linguistic information in three formats:

(i) Word list only
(ii) Alphabet only
(iii) Word list and alphabet.

There is a principle behind this:

(i) For languages which have no special script or are written with Latin letters, the provision of an alphabet is obviously unnecessary. This applies to Croatian, Hungarian, Basque and Breton. As for Albanian, von Harff says that the language «is difficult to write, as they have their own letters in this country» (p. 78). The orthographical possibilities for writing Albanian are several and, by not providing an alphabet, it seems that von Harff

[63] Letts 1946, xxxi.

was content to avoid the question. Turkish also did not need an alphabet, for the Arabic letters had already been given (p. 133). For these languages von Harff therefore gives only a word list.

(ii) Since the Syrian Christians (in Sinai) and Armenians (in Antioch) in daily life speak Arabic (pp. 151, 235), there was no need to repeat the Arabic word list already given on pp. 129-132.[64] But in their religious services and holy offices, they use respectively «Chaldean» and «their own language» (pp. 151, 235). Accordingly, von Harff added the Syriac and Armenian alphabets to his narrative (pp. 150,[65] 236).

The cases of Ethiopic and Coptic are somewhat different. This is because von Harff's information about the "Thomas-Christians" of Soqotra and the "Christian Abyssinians" of the Nile valley (also referred to as "Ethiopians, called Abyssinians or Jacobites") was only partial and possibly indirect. It is not certain that he actually set foot in Soqotra – his data may have been acquired in Aden.[66] Although he reports that these Thomas-Christians «have their own speech» (p. 160), it seems that he simply did not have the opportunity to compile a vocabulary of it – he tells us that he was pressed for time in Soqotra (p. 157). The strange alphabet table appended to the description (p. 160) gives the garbled names of the Hebrew letters spelled out in full: **a-le-phu**, **beth-theth**, **ga-me-lie** etc., accompanied at each point by the appropriate syllabic signs in Geʿez. As for the monophysite Christian Abyssinians of the Nile, von Harff's first-hand knowledge of the Horn of Africa is even more doubtful.[67] He may not have given examples of their speech for the simple reason that he had never come into contact with them. It seems significant that von Harff's alphabets for both the Thomas-Christians of Soqotra and the Christian Abyssinians of the Nile are not original with him, but were taken (like his

[64] The Arabic of von Harff's Arabic word list is of the Syro-Palestinian type and may well have been collected in Jerusalem: Stumme 1914, 130-131.

[65] Von Harff's Syriac alphabet was apparently taken from Breydenbach (Letts 1946, 151 n. 1).

[66] Letts 1946, xvi, xxvi, 156 n. 2.

[67] *Ibid.*, xvi, xxxiv and above n. 3.

aforementioned Syriac alphabet) from Breydenbach, where they are correctly called Ethiopic and Coptic respectively.[68]

(iii) This leaves us with Greek, Arabic and Hebrew, for each of which von Harff provides both a word list and an alphabet.[69] In principle, von Harff's word lists and alphabet tables go together, illustrating the spoken and written forms of the same language. With Greek and Arabic, there can be no doubt about the matter. But what about Hebrew? Hebrew is known to have died out as a natural spoken tongue over a thousand years before von Harff's visit. On the other hand, von Harff does not at all suggest that the Jews of Jerusalem spoke a language different from that represented by the Hebrew letters he provided.

7. The Sitz im Leben of the word list

Important questions are raised here regarding the acquisition and practice of this spoken Hebrew. How was the ability to speak it acquired? Who used it, when and why? What is its *Sitz im Leben*?

Natural survival?

Klausner, who repeatedly stressed the day-to-day, practical nature of the material, was inclined to believe that von Harff's word list provides evidence of living, mother tongue Hebrew. Natural colloquial Hebrew – he contends – had not yet completely died out in Palestine (עדיין לא מתה הלשון העברית בארץ־ישראל לגמרה p. 114) and that even at the end of the 15th century there were still native Jews who continued (שהמשיכו p. 116) "more or less" to speak Hebrew. It is this inherited, living, indigenous Palestinian Hebrew that is attested in von Harff's material.[70] In support of this

[68] *Ibid.*, 160 n. 1, 177 n. 1.

[69] The Greek alphabet seems to owe a good deal to Breydenbach (Letts 1946, 90 n. 1).

[70] Based upon this assumption is the notion sometimes expressed that von Harff's word list was intended to serve as a practical linguistic guide for any visitor to supposedly Hebrew-speaking Jerusalem: Klausner 1923, 114 (תיירים־נוסעים);

interpretation, Klausner, p. 117 appealed, inter alia, to the celebrated (but very doubtful) case of Peqiʿin in Galilee. Local interest in Peqiʿin was very strong at the time.

The romantic notion of the uninterrupted survival of spoken Hebrew in its homeland from the end of the Biblical period, through the Middle Ages, until the end of the 15th century[71] appears highly unlikely. Such a scenario is against all authenticated facts and surely devoid of any historical probability. Furthermore, the inspection of von Harff's material itself shows it not to be a natural, organic continuation of ancient Hebrew usage. Its hybrid Ashkenazi-Sephardi identity, the presence of European calques, non-Hebrew usages and Romance words speak strongly against an unbroken survival of indigenous Palestinian Hebrew. It is also passing strange that such native Palestinian Hebrew should be communicated by three German immigrants/visitors.

Hebrew as lingua franca

The idea that von Harff's word list of 1498/1499 exhibits natural, vernacular Palestinian Hebrew inherited from ancient times is not only inherently improbable, but also made unnecessary by Klausner's alternative scenario. According to his other view (to which he himself was less inclined) the language of von Harff's word list reveals an improvised, artificial, *ad hoc* Hebrew reserved for particular occasions, viz. the meeting of Jews from different countries who shared no other common language.[72] This assessment seems far better adjusted to the known facts.

Haramati 1997, 101 (בעזר לתיירים בארץ) and similarly 102. But the Hebrew documented by von Harff was surely for use by the Jewish visitor only.

[71] Klausner 1923, 117: כאן, בארץ־ישראל, היה יסוד כזה מפני שלא נשתכחה כאן הלשון העברית החיה מעולם.

[72] This interpretation is in principle that of Braslavsky 1954, 150-151 (< idem 1936-1937, 69).

Von Harff kept company with his three German Jews in Jerusalem because he could converse with them in German. German, however, was not spoken by all Jews in Jerusalem – von Harff himself notes that «within Jerusalem live many Jews» (p. 217), and, of course, not all of them were Ashkenazim. When von Harff's German Jewish friends needed to communicate with co-religionists of non-German speech, e.g. Sephardim, they used Hebrew. This is what he meant when he says that he collected «certain words from their daily speech» (p. 218) (*van yerrer degelicher spraechen etzlige woert*), and it is this intercommunal, international Hebrew = "Jewish speech" which appears in von Harff's glossary. This explains why it is neither Ashkenazi nor Sephardi in character and why it shows signs of European influence. It also explains the presence of Romance words. Although the Romance origin of **beyueren** "to drink" (30) and **dormen** "to sleep" (32) has long been known (Babinger 1920, 73 n. 5), it is not clear by what route they found their way into von Harff's word list. Supposing these words to have originated in the Sephardi communities of southern Europe (Spanish, Italian etc.), variations upon them could easily have become part of the general local vocabulary of the *yishuv* and thus known to every Jerusalem Jew[73] – for this reason they have sometimes been termed "Ladino".[74] On the other hand, these words might have come from northern Europe and, like the afore-mentioned (§5) **tangol**, **balbaes**, **agila**, **baeskisse**, **kaff** and **measlaufen**, were perhaps already known to von Harff's German informants before their arrival in Jerusalem. This was the view of Stumme (1914, 129) who suggested a Rotwelsch origin for both words, observing that **dormen** (< Italian) is frequent in Rotwelsch.[75] To this it may be

[73] In accordance with the second suggestion in *ibid.*, 151 n. 85 (< *ibid.*, 69 n. 64). It should be remembered that at this period the Jewish population of Jerusalem was overwhelmingly Sephardi – a situation that was not to be reversed until the second half of the 19th century.

[74] Babinger 1920, 73; Braslavsky, 1954, 151 (< idem 1936-1937, 69).

[75] See the documentation in Avé-Lallemant 1862, 534 and Wolf 1956, no. 1064. Ish-Shalom 1965, 273 n. 7 indicated a connection with Yiddish דרימלען "to

added that באפען *bafen* "to drink" occurs both in Rotwelsch[76] and in some western varieties of Yiddish.[77] It is noteworthy that these two Romance words appear in von Harff's list with the German infinitive ending: **beyueren**, **dormen**.

Far from being a natural, inborn mother tongue, the language of von Harff's word list is a makeshift Hebrew *lingua franca* imposed by necessity. It was used outside the home among Jews, between whom no other shared means of communication were available. This situation was for centuries characteristic of Jerusalem, but by no means restricted to the Holy City or even to Palestine; it would recur wherever and whenever Jews from different countries came together. Many parallels could be given; the famous case reported for 12th century Spain by Ibn Parḥon is cited by Klausner.[78]

We should, I think, envisage a situation somewhat as follows: von Harff was curious as to how his German Jewish friends in Jerusalem conversed with their correligionists in the city who did not know German. On discovering that intercommunal communication was conducted in Hebrew, he asked for some samples. Using the format of his other glossaries, he recorded their answers in the Hebrew word list which has been the subject of this essay, respectfully offered to our esteemed jubilarian, Riccardo Contini.

8. Conclusion

The German traveller Arnold von Harff visited Jerusalem at the turn of 1498/1499 and compiled a word list of "Jewish speech". Most interestingly, this "Jewish speech" turns out to be Hebrew. It

take a nap, doze"; this, however, is apparently of Slavic origin: Weinreich 2008 ii, 526, 541, 631, 698.

[76] Avé-Lallemant 1862, 522 and Wolf 1956, no. 234.

[77] Beider 2015, 397 n. 122, 399 n. 138 (where von Harff's **beyueren** is mentioned).

[78] Klausner 1923, 116. For this and other instances, see e.g., very briefly, Kutscher 1982, 149. The mention there of non-Jewish travellers reporting spoken Hebrew in Jerusalem in the 15th century refers to von Harff.

is absolutely out of the question that this language could be a direct, natural continuation of the Hebrew of antiquity; Hebrew had become extinct as a mother tongue many centuries before von Harff's time. The Hebrew of his word list cannot possibly represent the language that Jewish children in Jerusalem spoke at home from infancy. Nevertheless, von Harff's data and the manner of their presentation give the firm impression of authentic information collected on the spot and reflecting a real linguistic situation in which Hebrew actually was spoken.

The language of von Harff's material does not represent a coherent, uniform tradition of Hebrew. It is partly Ashkenazi and partly Sephardi, being neither the one nor the other. It also contains interferences from European languages as well as a couple of words of Romance origin. This Hebrew is international in character and, as such, has a definite *Sitz im Leben*. It provides a valuable glimpse into the linguistic situation of Jerusalem at the time. Among themselves, within each of the various communities, the Jews of Jerusalem, of course, spoke their own languages. But when Jews from different communities met outside and no common language was available, recourse was perforce had to Hebrew. Hebrew was their common linguistic denominator, albeit vernacularly native to neither party. In cosmopolitan Jerusalem use of this improvised Hebrew linguistic medium had become a social necessity. This is what is implied by von Harff's "daily speech".[79]

This artificial, international Hebrew had surely been in existence a good while before von Harff documented it in concrete form in his word list of 1498/1499. It was to become an important communicative tool in the subsequent history of the area, especially in Jerusalem of the 19th century. It was, in fact, the

[79] Stumme (1914, 129), who treated the Arabic and Turkish word lists of von Harff, was deterred from studying the Hebrew material because it had been contributed by three German Jews and therefore seemed to him "somewhat problematical". He presumably thought that von Harff's word list, having been provided by foreigners, could not represent authentic Jerusalem usage. It was, however, precisely for the benefit of such visiting (Jewish) foreigners that this international Hebrew existed.

emergence of this inter-community language in Jerusalem (and in other Palestinian towns) which provided the groundwork for the revival of spoken Hebrew at the end of the 19th century, leading subsequently to the emergence of the modern vernacular of the State of Israel.

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La fuga di Ehud

GIANCARLO LACERENZA

A Riccardo

ἐν φιλίᾳ αὐτοῦ τέρψις ἀγαθὴ
καὶ ἐν πόνοις χειρῶν αὐτοῦ
πλοῦτος ἀνεκλιπὴς
(da *Sapienza* 8:17-18)

This article reexamines the vocabulary of Judges 3 in the passage about Judge Ehud and the Moabite king Eglon. Particular attention is given to the description of the royal private room and the manner in which Ehud manages to escape from a locked room after killing the king.

Keywords: Book of Judges – Ehud – Eglon – left-handedness – biblical tricksters

1. Premessa

Il terzo capitolo del libro dei Giudici è occupato quasi interamente dal racconto della vittoria israelita sui Moabiti, conseguita anche grazie a una prodezza del giudice Ehud: l'assassinio del re moabita Eglon compiuto non sul campo di battaglia, ma all'interno della sua stessa reggia e, apparentemente, sul suo trono regale. L'eccezionalità dell'impresa sta tuttavia non nel fattore di rischio, quanto nel suo essere tecnicamente un "delitto perfetto": in quanto realizzato in una stanza chiusa e senza

alcun indizio sul possibile colpevole, rendendo così tale storia un'antesignana del *Locked-Room Mystery*, nelle cui numerose antologie essa è peraltro raramente accolta.[1]

La storia di Ehud possiede però anche molte altre singolarità di dettaglio, sia in alcuni elementi narrativi – rilevante è ad esempio il fatto che l'eroe sia mancino o, secondo alcuni, ambidestro – sia nel lessico: ancora oscuro in alcuni punti cruciali, fra cui spiccano i passaggi relativi alla fuga di Ehud dal *locus delicti*, la cui dinamica tutt'altro che chiara ha sfidato nel tempo filologi e biblisti.[2] Nelle prossime pagine si presenteranno alcuni di tali problemi, senza la pretesa di dire cose particolarmente nuove e tanto meno di proporre soluzioni.[3]

2. Trama, simboli e intreccio

Ridotta all'essenziale, l'impresa di Ehud è senza dubbio temeraria, ma non particolarmente complicata. Introdottosi a palazzo col pretesto di consegnare a Eglon un dono – gli Israeliti erano tributari dei Moabiti ormai da quasi vent'anni – Ehud riesce a restare solo con Eglon, asserendo di dovergli trasmettere, oltre al dono, un messaggio riservato o segreto (Gdc 3: 19-20). Avendo tuttavia precedentemente nascosto un pugnale non solo sotto le vesti (v. 16), ma anche sul fianco destro – una posizione inusuale, dove le guardie del re non l'avrebbero mai notato – al momento opportuno, mentre Eglon si trova seduto in una camera appartata, non appena si alza Ehud sfila l'arma dal nascondiglio con la mano sinistra e colpisce il re a morte, affondandogliela nel ventre. Con altrettanta prontezza l'eroe esce dalla stanza, ma non prima di

[1] Adey 1991; Soupart *et al.* 1997; Lacombe *et al.* 2003; Skupin 2019. Nella letteratura critica sul genere, Cook 2011.

[2] L'analisi forse più dettagliata e col pregio del taglio multidisciplinare è in Halpern 1988a, 39-75 (anche in versione abbreviata, id. 1988b) le cui conclusioni sono ancora molto seguite. Si vedano inoltre Deist 1996; Ausloos 2017; Assis 2023, 81-95. Fra i molti commenti alla storia di Ehud nel quadro più generale del libro dei *Giudici*, mi limito a segnalare Soggin 1981, 47-56; Amit 1999, 171-198.

[3] Tributo minimo quindi per Riccardo Contini, ma presentato con sincero affetto e gratitudine.

averne chiuso i chiavistelli dall'interno e fuggendo senza farsi notare dalle guardie; le quali, temendo di disturbare il sovrano creduto intento nei propri bisogni, rimandano l'ingresso finché il loro intervento è ormai inutile: Eglon giace a terra, trafitto a morte in una stanza chiusa. Tornato fra i suoi, Ehud li chiama a raccolta e riesce ad aver ragione dei guerrieri moabiti, facendone strage e assicurando al suo popolo una pace duratura.

A contrappunto di questa storia di morte e di scaltrezza si trovano nel testo anche altri temi e spunti di vario genere, solo una parte dei quali faceva parte, probabilmente, della narrazione originaria. Accanto infatti ad alcuni elementi essenziali per il funzionamento del meccanismo della trama, come il necessario mancinismo del protagonista,[4] altri appaiono rispondere non tanto alle necessità dell'intreccio, quanto all'arricchimento del

[4] Dopo nome, patronimico e dichiarazione di afferenza tribale (beniaminita), Ehud è definito אִישׁ אִטֵּר יַד־יְמִינוֹ *'îš 'iṭṭēr yad-y*^{e}*mînô*, traducibile solo come 'uomo impedito nella sua mano destra'; in ebraico rabbinico אִטֵּר *'iṭṭēr* (qui 'impedito') si troverà anche di persona con la mano destra 'legata', ossia bloccata o limitata nei movimenti, per disabilità o per una condizione che la renda inadatta al lavoro manuale (Jastrow 1903, 43). Nel caso di Ehud l'espressione si deve necessariamente intendere, come esige il contesto, 'incapace di usare la mano destra' e quindi 'mancino'; come del resto mancini sono definiti oltre (Gdc 20:16) i settecento frombolieri scelti fra gli altri guerrieri beniaminiti, per questa particolarità fisica molto utile in assetto di guerra, come dimostrerebbero alcuni bassorilievi neoassiri (una schiera o un'unità di frombolieri, o di arcieri, è infatti molto più efficace se può lanciare contemporaneamente da entrambi i lati). L'uso nella LXX di ἀμφοτεροδέξιος 'ambidestro' appare quindi come un'incomprensione o una forzatura, tendente forse a lasciare nella traduzione l'immagine della 'destra' a scapito dell'alternativa lessicale rappresentata da αριστερόχειρας, 'mancino, di mano sinistra' (l'efficienza della mano sinistra di Ehud sarà evidente al v. 21). Ma nella Bibbia non c'è un termine simile e infatti, qualche secolo dopo la redazione di *Giudici*, per indicare la condizione di ambidestro dei beniaminiti in 1Cr 12:2, non essendovi un vocabolo specifico si ricorrerà a una perifrasi («capaci di armarsi sia a destra che a sinistra con pietre e frecce per l'arco»). Tutte queste coincidenze – tre casi di mancinismo biblico e tutti per la stessa tribù – hanno fatto pensare a un'eventuale predisposizione genetica nella discendenza di Beniamino con tale caratteristica (cf. Seevers – Klein 2013).

racconto con dettagli umoristici e sarcastici,[5] cruenti fino allo *splatter*[6] o ancora di valenza simbolica.[7]

La storia dell'assassinio di Eglon è dunque a tutti gli effetti una storia violenta presentata in un alone d'inganno e di mistero, degna di figurare accanto alle altre – e non poche – storie truci

[5] Sulla denigrazione dei Moabiti per la loro presunta stupidità, cf. per esempio Alter 1981, 19-20. Il tema della pinguetudine del re è stato tuttavia spesso esagerato: nel TM Eglon appare sicuramente come un uomo sovrappeso (אִישׁ בָּרִיא מְאֹד *ʾîš bārîʾ mᵉʾōd*, 'uomo molto grasso', v. 17), ma questa caratteristica personale non può essere automaticamente estesa a tutti i guerrieri moabiti (così Halpern 1988a, 60), che il v. 29 definisce invece, in rapporto alla loro prestanza, אִישׁ כָּל־שָׁמֵן וְכָל־אִישׁ חָיִל (*ʾîš kōl-šāmēn we-ḵōl-ʾîš ḥāyil*, 'ognuno dei quali era robusto e possente'). Oltretutto, nella LXX si dice di Eglon che era *ἀνὴρ ἀστεῖος σφόδρα*, un 'uomo molto bello' ('florido', nella traduzione intelligente ma di compromesso in Scrofani 2016, 143); la storia lessicale di *ἀστεῖος* indica invece una diversa lezione nel testo ebraico utilizzato per la traduzione. Sugli spunti umoristici nella pericope, cf. particolarmente Jull 1998; Schroeder 2022.

[6] Tal è il dettaglio dell'affondo della lama nel corpo del re, scomparendo nel grasso fino all'uscita – da una parte o dall'altra – di un qualcosa che non si capisce se siano visceri o feci (vv. 21-22) oppure, secondo un'altra interpretazione di וַיֵּצֵא הַפַּרְשְׁדֹנָה *wa-yēṣēʾ ha-parᵉšᵉdonāh*, con affondo del pugnale fino all'ano; ma non sappiamo se l'autore avesse in mente un moto a luogo, quindi פַּרְשְׁדֹן *parᵉšᵉdon* («e [il coltello] uscì verso il luogo immondo») o un sostantivo a desinenza femminile פַּרְשְׁדֹנָה *parᵉšᵉdonāh* («e uscì la sozzura»); cf. Kraeling 1935, 208; Halpern 1988, 59, 69 nota 3. Al riguardo occorre evidenziare che, per concordanza di genere, il maschile singolare וַיֵּצֵא *wa-yēṣēʾ* si accorderebbe solo con l'eventuale sostantivo פַּרְשְׁדֹן *parᵉšᵉdon* (m. sing. o collettivo) e non con il femminile חֶרֶב *ḥerev*, 'spada'; ciò farebbe escludere che sia stata la spada a 'uscire' e non gli intestini, o il loro contenuto. Nondimeno, l'instabilità del predicato nell'accordo di genere e specie con femminili, plurali e collettivi (cf. Joüon – Muraoka 2000, 552-557, § 150) non fa cadere del tutto tale possibilità.

[7] Fra altri possibili esempi, non è parso infatti casuale che il nome del re Eglon (עֶגְלוֹן *ʿeglôn*) risulti collegabile, con allusione sacrificale, a עֵגֶל *ʿēgel*, 'vitello' (o anche, ma in tal caso con allusione alla corporatura, alla stessa radice lessicale dell'aggettivo עָגֹל *ʿāgōl*, 'tondo, tondeggiante' (Knauf 1991; Assis 2023, 81 nota 2). Gli spunti offerti da due personaggi singolari quali Ehud ed Eglon sono stati, sorprendentemente, assai poco sviluppati nella letteratura midrashica. Sugli svariati elementi simbolici e persino archetipici nelle figure di Ehud ed Eglon, si vedano gli studi di Grottanelli 1978 (su Ehud, con argomenti poi approfonditi anche in altri contributi) e id. 1979 (su Eglon).

presenti nella Bibbia;[8] ma allo stesso tempo, per le caratteristiche appena enunciate, è fra le poche a presentare (e in pochissimo spazio) una serie di elementi tali da porla su un piano diverso, per la varietà delle possibili chiavi di lettura e per essere, in ultima analisi, pressoché inutile allo svolgimento dell'azione: dal momento che lo scontro armato coi Moabiti ha il suo esito positivo, a quanto sembra, indipendentemente dalla morte del re.

3. Il fresco in una stanza: questioni di lessico

Malgrado la linearità degli eventi, ci troviamo dunque di fronte a una situazione esegeticamente alquanto intricata e la descrizione della scena del crimine rientra fra gli elementi non solo più controversi, ma anche più rilevanti, essendo direttamente collegata al modo in cui Ehud riesce a stupire gli avversari e sfuggire alla cattura.

Sia l'azione che il contesto palaziale e la presunta conformazione architettonica di quest'ultimo sono stati oggetto di molta attenzione e, fra i temi più discussi, vi è appunto il modo in cui è descritta la stanza dove si compie il delitto. Dopo aver mandato via gli astanti per ascoltare il segreto che Ehud avrebbe da riferirgli (v. 19), Eglon sembra aver lasciato la sala delle udienze, ritirandosi in un'altra stanza sopraelevata, una עֲלִיָּה *ʿăliyyāh*: termine non infrequente nella Bibbia ebraica e nel nostro caso tipologicamente (o qualitativamente) specificata al v. 20 come una עֲלִיַּת הַמְקֵרָה *ʿăliyyāṯ ha-meqērāh*; precisazione ripetuta al v. 24, dove però al posto di *ʿăliyyāh* è usato (forse sinonimicamente) חֶדֶר *ḥeder*, 'stanza'. Ma *ḥeder* è generico, mentre *ʿăliyyāh* (anche al v. 25, isolato) può indicare solo una camera, o uno spazio abitabile posto a un livello superiore o a un piano rialzato; quanto a *meqērāh*, il termine appare solo in questi due casi e la sua interpretazione non è mai stata agevole.

Nella LXX dei *Giudici* (sia recensione A che B) la *ʿăliyyāh* dei vv. 20 e 24 è resa alla lettera con ὑπερῷον e nel v. 20 si traduce l'intera espressione che nel TM è «Ehud lo raggiunse mentre

[8] Sulla cui fisionomia cf. Capelli 2021.

sedeva nella *ʿăliyyāt ha-meqērāh*», con καὶ Αωδ εἰσῆλθεν πρὸς αὐτόν καὶ αὐτὸς ἐκάθητο ἐν τῷ ὑπερῴῳ τῷ θερινῷ: «Aod lo raggiunse e lui era seduto nella sua stanza estiva». L'espressione 'stanza estiva' (o 'dell'estate': τῷ θερινῷ, adottato anche da Girolamo, in *aestivo cenaculo*) non lascia adito a dubbi e il traduttore pensava certamente a un ambiente congegnato per fronteggiare la calura, quindi ombreggiato o fresco, magari con disponibilità d'acqua; associando dunque *meqērāh* alla stessa radice lessicale dei sostantivi che in ebraico biblico indicano il 'freddo': קֹר *qōr* (Gen 8:22), קָרָה *qārāh* (Gb 37:9; Pro 25:20; Na 3:17) e l'aggettivo קַר *qar*, 'freddo' (Pro 17:27, 25:25; Is 18:14). In certi luoghi e climi lo stato di frescura implica quasi naturalmente una connessione con l'acqua e soprattutto con la sua non sempre agevole ricerca, per cui non appare strano il rapporto dei due termini con le radici *qrr* e *qwr* per l'azione di 'scavare, trovare o far fluire acqua'.[9]

La frequente traduzione, specialmente moderna, di *ʿăliyyāṯ ha-meqērāh* come 'stanza superiore fresca', 'rinfrescata' o 'del refrigerio' è ben giustificabile in base al contesto in cui si svolge l'azione e peraltro non esclude affatto l'attendibilità della traduzione dei LXX, forse letterale ma comunque sensata, come 'stanza estiva'. Nondimeno, la rarità di *meqērāh* ha stimolato ricerche su altri possibili significati; e il primo discostamento di rilievo dalle traduzioni più diffuse si è avuto con l'ipotesi che *meqērāh* non si riferisca al 'fresco', ma a un foro o a un pertugio grazie al quale la *ʿăliyyāh* di Eglon sarebbe stata in grado di assolvere anche alla funzione di luogo di decenza.[10] Ciò del resto nel racconto è indicato – sia pure implicitamente – al momento in cui le guardie di Eglon, entrate in sala e salite alla *ʿăliyyāh*, non vedendolo, non dubitano che il re si stesse 'coprendo i piedi', ossia fosse intento a compiere i propri bisogni nel suo gabinetto (v. 24).

[9] I brani più importanti da considerare sono 2Re 19:24 e Is 37:25; Ger 6:7.

[10] In Glaser 1932, pensando al significato di 'scavo' indicato sopra per *qwr*/ *qrr*: quindi più o meno 'stanza della buca', ossia una latrina. Secondo Glaser, peraltro, *ḥeder* e *ʿăliyyāh* ai vv. 20 e 24 non sarebbero affatto sinonimi, perché il primo si riferirebbe a una stanzetta o a un'area separata all'interno della *ʿăliyyāh*, ossia un *cabinet*.

Che la *ʿăliyyāṯ ha-meqērāh* sia stata immaginata con un divisorio o uno spazio separato munito di un dispositivo per assolvere a tali necessità appare dunque certo, ed è un elemento utile al racconto; ma l'espressione in sé, secondo qualcuno (Halpern), non indicherebbe affatto l'utilizzo scatologico (primario o secondario) di una camera al piano superiore della sala per le udienze, o di un suo eventuale luogo separato; ma la sua stessa struttura o conformazione, che sarebbe stata caratterizzata dall'uso di travi, in ebraico biblico e secondo la vocalizzazione del TM קֹרוֹת *qōrôṯ* (sing. קוֹרָה *qôrāh*, più volte attestato): מְקֵרָה *meqērāh* indicherebbe quindi il suo essere 'dotata di travi' o 'posta su travi'.[11] Soluzione quest'ultima preferibile, in quanto non si sarebbe trattato di una vera e propria stanza separata dalla parte sottostante, ma di una specie di piattaforma o soppalco, formato da una travatura, su cui si trovava il trono stesso.[12] Poiché, secondo tale interpretazione, al termine della scalinata verso la *ʿăliyyāh* si sarebbe trovato il trono, le porte di cui si parla dovevano trovarsi dietro o lateralmente a quest'ultimo, per nascondere il *ḥeder* con la latrina (spazio indicato in ebraico, molto successivamente, con *māqôm*). Tuttavia, l'unica apparizione del termine כִּסֵּא *kissēʾ* 'trono/seggio' in tutto il racconto è solo alla fine del v. 20: dove si dice che Eglon – già al piano superiore – per ascoltare il messaggio di Ehud «si alzò dal suo seggio» (וַיָּקָם מֵעַל הַכִּסֵּא, *wa-yāqom mēʿal ha-kissēʾ*).[13]

[11] Halpern 1988a, 45-46 (la possibilità che si parli di travi è stata espressa anche anteriormente, per esempio in Garsiel 1977).

[12] Halpern 1988a, 51 e fig. 3.IV: «a throne platform overlooking and accessible from the audience chamber». A sostegno di tale possibilità si potrebbe citare Gen 19:8, in cui *qôrāh* sarebbe da intendere come 'tettoia, pergolato'. La presenza del trono sulla piattaforma elevata è però in questo caso una supposizione; e l'ipotesi della travatura manca a oggi di supporto archeologico, non essendosi mai rinvenuto alcun indizio riferibile con certezza a strutture del genere, in tutta l'area, per quanto la loro esistenza si possa inferire da acune fonti.

[13] In realtà non è certo che si parli qui proprio del trono, dal momento che *kissēʾ* può aver indicato anche un altro tipo di seggio, analogo alla sedia stercoraria o *porphyretica* papale; a meno che il trono stesso non fosse conformato per consentire al sovrano di restare seduto, se richiesto dal cerimoniale, anche per diverse ore. Che si trattasse di un seggio del genere è sostenuto in Jull 1998.

4. Vie d'uscita

Resta ora da vedere in qual modo Ehud, una volta infilzato il moabita, sia uscito dalla stanza senza essere visto e non dalla porta, perché da egli stesso chiusa. In effetti è il testo stesso a dirlo, ma in maniera non subito comprensibile. Al v. 23 del TM leggiamo:

וַיֵּצֵא אֵהוּד הַמִּסְדְּרוֹנָה וַיִּסְגֹּר דַּלְתוֹת הָעֲלִיָּה בַּעֲדוֹ וְנָעָל

wa-yēṣē᾽ ᾽ēhûd ha-misderônāh wa-yisgōr daleṯôṯ hā-ʿaliyyāh baʿăḏô we-nāʿāl

Quindi Ehud uscì dal [(attra)verso il] *misderôn*, chiuse le porte della *ʿaliyyāh* dietro di sé e (le) chiuse.[14]

Il problema principale sta in הַמִּסְדְּרוֹנָה *ha-misderônāh*: sia per quanto concerne la traduzione dell'hapax מִסְדְּרוֹן *misderôn*; sia per come debba intendersene la forma. La *he* paragogica finale con determinazione è la forma classica di direzione o moto a luogo (cf. הַמִּדְבָּרָה *ha-midbārāh*, 'verso il deserto'; הַיָּמָּה *ha-yāmmāh*, 'verso il mare', etc.). Questo caso presenta però un'analogia – ed è difficile che si tratti di una coincidenza – con l'altra espressione problematica vista sopra (nota 6) e presente al v. 22: וַיֵּצֵא הַפַּרְשְׁדֹנָה *wa-yēṣē᾽ ha-paršedonāh*, riferita in quel caso non a Ehud, ma alla sua arma. In traduzione occorrerebbe quindi fare una scelta, possibilmente coerente per le due attestazioni, fra הַפַּרְשְׁדֹנָה *ha-paršedonāh* e הַמִּסְדְּרוֹנָה *ha-misderônāh*, come sostantivo determinato semplice femminile, o neutro; oppure come espressione di moto a luogo. Tuttavia, solo הַפַּרְשְׁדֹנָה *ha-paršedonāh* del v. 22 si può tradurre in entrambi i modi: sia «e uscì la sozzura»/«e uscirono le visceri», sia «e (l'arma) uscì dalla parte opposta». Cambia il soggetto: nel primo caso ciò che 'esce' (וַיֵּצֵא *wa-yēṣē᾽*) è il pacco intestinale o il suo contenuto,[15] mentre nel secondo caso –

[14] L'apparente ripetizione del 'chiudere' si riferisce a due azioni diverse (e ha infatti due verbi diversi): nel primo caso riguardante le porte, nel secondo la chiusura dei loro chiavistelli: per aprire la serratura le guardie adoperano infatti una chiave (מַפְתֵּחַ *maftēaḥ*, v. 25).

[15] Sicuramente quest'ultimo, secondo l'analisi di Barré 1991.

ammessa qui una discordanza di genere fra verbo e soggetto – si tratta del pugnale, la 'spada a due tagli' (*ḥerev*, 'spada', come già ricordato sopra, è femminile).[16] Al v. 23 ciò che 'esce', invece, non può essere altro che Ehud stesso, perché così è scritto: וַיֵּצֵא אֵהוּד הַמִּסְדְּרוֹנָה *wa-yēṣē᾽ ᾽ēhûd ha-misderônāh*, «Ehud uscì verso il *misderôn*».

Nessuno sa cosa sia il מִסְדְּרוֹן *misderôn*, che la LXX sembra tradurre a senso con προστάς, 'portico'; ma è poco verosimile che nella mente dell'autore si pensasse al condotto della latrina regale, un passaggio presumibilmente angusto e indecoroso per un eroe.[17] Appare ben più probabile che si tratti di un elemento architettonico, come proposto nella LXX; risulta quindi plausibile, considerata l'azione, interpretare che Ehud uscì non 'verso' ma 'tramite, attraverso' il *misderôn*.[18] Tale soluzione, sempre di Halpern, che presuppone un vano sotto alla *ʿăliyyāh* con una cassamatta dotata di una scala che permetteva la discesa nel porticato sottostante, appare però artificiosa e poco sostenuta dal testo; senza contare il fatto che – di nuovo – in tal modo si fa uscire Ehud dallo stesso percorso degli escrementi regali: non proprio dal pozzo nero, ma pur sempre da un ripostiglio sottostante al gabinetto: un piccolo ambiente sotto le supposte 'travi' che doveva, necessariamente, avere una via d'entrata e una d'uscita per poter essere pulito e svuotato. Anche la spiegazione di מִסְדְּרוֹן *misderôn* da una radice *sdr* che indicherebbe l''essere chiuso, cieco, interdetto', non convince più dell'altra accezione, più comune, di 'essere allineato, messo in ordine'.[19]

[16] Su dettagli quali la tipologia di coltello o spada si sono soffermati Berman 2002; Stone 2009 (quest'ultimo peraltro ridimensionando, probabilmente a torto, la portata simbolica dell'intero episodio).

[17] Così invece Glaser 1932.

[18] Halpern 1988a, 56. Kraeling 1935, 208-209: soppalco sorretto da pali.

[19] Queste, in sintesi, le conclusioni in Halpern 1988a, 58. Nello studio – peraltro meglio documentato sulla parte archeologica che sugli altri versanti – non si fa cenno all'interpretazione assai simile già fornita a suo tempo da Girolamo, traducendo הַמִּסְדְּרוֹנָה *ha-misdᵉrônāh* con *per posticam* (vi è un lieve spostamento al v. 24), ossia tramite un vano posteriore o una porta secondaria, nascosta e arretrata rispetto alla sala principale o alla *ʿăliyyāh*. Nella Vulgata *postica* appare solo un'altra volta, per la porta laterale nel giardino in cui è

Se in מִסְדְּרוֹן *misderôn* si deve proprio immaginare un elemento architettonico poco appariscente usato per separare e che, allo stesso tempo, può essere varcato o attraversato, una possibile traduzione da non trascurare è 'grata', ossia una finestra fornita di un graticcio, di listelli o sbarre, funzionale alla necessaria ventilazione di questa parte dell'altana regale, forse anche per questo chiamata *ʿăliyyāṯ ha-meqērāh*: una specie di "camera dello scirocco" ma in negativo, perché non sottoterra ma sopraelevata.[20]

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ambientato il crimine sventato ai danni di Susanna (Dan 13:26). Anche nella LXX/Θ del brano in questione i familiari irrompono nel giardino del misfatto διὰ τῆς πλαγίας θύρας «da una porta laterale» (Vulgata: *inruerunt per posticam*) probabilmente nascosta o non immediatamente visibile.

[20] Per lessico e descrizione di altre finestre e balaustre fornite di grate o d'inferriate si veda Ez 41:16, meglio nella versione della LXX, più dettagliata del TM.

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Nomina sunt omina. *Lingua, identità e memoria in un racconto di Aharon Megged*

RAFFAELE ESPOSITO

This contribution examines Aharon Megged's short story *Yad va-šem* (1955) through the lenses of language, memory, and identity. Set in Israel in the years immediately following independence, the story revolves around an apparently marginal family dispute: the name to be given to an unborn child. As the analysis shows, the onomastic disagreement gradually reveals a deeper fracture between generations and between competing cultural horizons.

The grandfather, a survivor of Eastern European Jewry haunted by memories of a destroyed community, proposes to name the child Mendele in memory of a grandson murdered in the Holocaust. But the proposal encounters firm resistance from the young Israeli parents-to-be, his granddaughter and her husband, who have already chosen the biblical names Osnat and Ehud. This opposition is not presented as a simple clash of tastes or sensibilities, but as the expression of a broader process through which diasporic memory, linguistic forms, and emotional registers are filtered and often excluded from the emerging Israeli cultural framework. Names, in this context, function as condensed signs, carrying semantic and affective values that extend well beyond the individual sphere.

Drawing on reflections on the social function of proper names (Barthes), the symbolic dimension of narrative form (Jameson), and the politics of language and gender in the Hebrew–Yiddish divide (Seidman), the article shows how phonology itself becomes an ideological threshold. The rejection of Mendele is articulated less through explicit argument than through aversion to sound and resonance. What is refused is not merely a memory, but the voice through which that memory would be transmitted.

The absence of any explicit mention of Yiddish, despite its constant evocation, becomes itself a meaningful narrative strategy, pointing to a form of silencing that operates through omission rather than negation. The unassigned name thus

emerges as a symbolic remainder: a trace of a past that cannot be fully integrated into the present of a post-traumatic society.

Keywords: Onomastics – Hebrew and Yiddish – Israeli identity – Cultural memory – Post-Holocaust literature

1. Introduzione

Il presente contributo propone una lettura del racconto *Il nome* (*Yad va-šem*, 1955) di Aharon Megged,[1] con particolare attenzione al conflitto simbolico generato dalla scelta del nome da attribuire a un nascituro. Ambientato nell'Israele degli anni Cinquanta, la storia mette in scena un dissidio intergenerazionale che si traduce in tensione linguistica, ideologica e affettiva, tra nomi yiddish, nomi ebraici della diaspora e onomastica biblica rivisitata. Un disaccordo familiare apparentemente marginale – la scelta del nome per un bambino non ancora nato – si trasforma in un dispositivo narrativo di forte densità simbolica. Attraverso la questione onomastica, Megged rappresenta la frattura tra due ordini di ebraicità: quello diasporico, segnato dallo yiddish, dalla vulnerabilità e dalla trasmissione affettiva, e quello sabra, proiettato verso un'identità nuova, ebraico-israeliana, ancorata all'ebraico moderno, alla forza militare e all'oblio selettivo. La scena narrativa assume così una funzione critica: il linguaggio dei personaggi diventa il luogo di manifestazione di ideologie interiorizzate, mentre i nomi propri si configurano come segni carichi di memoria e di rimozione.

L'analisi offerta in queste pagine prende le mosse dal dato lessicale e dalla semantica culturale dell'ebraico israeliano, inserendosi nel dibattito sulla costruzione dell'identità israeliana e sulla rimozione della lingua e della memoria diasporica.

[1] Megged 1963, di seguito citato in passi tradotti dall'autore di queste pagine. Per una versione italiana: Megged 1966.

2. Nomi per gente forte e nomi per bambini brutti

La vicenda è ambientata in Israele negli anni immediatamente successivi all'indipendenza – lo stesso periodo in cui il racconto fu pubblicato – e si svolge in un «sobborgo meridionale» di una città non specificata.[2] La narrazione, asciutta ed essenziale, si concentra sulle figure del nonno Ziskind, immigrato ebreo dell'Europa orientale, di sua figlia Rachel e di sua nipote Raya, in attesa del primo figlio.

Ziskind è un uomo anziano e fragile, affetto da una forma incipiente di demenza e tormentato dal ricordo del villaggio natio in Ucraina, dove ha lasciato un figlio e un nipote, che in seguito sono stati assassinati dai nazisti assieme a tutti coloro che non erano emigrati prima. Rachel, sua figlia, è una presenza affettuosa e contenuta. Non viene specificato se sia nata in Europa o in Israele. La sua posizione intermedia tra le due generazioni – da un lato vicina alla memoria paterna, dall'altro solidale con le scelte della figlia – la colloca simbolicamente come figura di transizione. La nipote Raya e suo marito Yehuda, giovani e determinati, nativi di Israele, incarnano invece una generazione nuova, più assertiva e radicata nel presente israeliano.

Il racconto segue i loro incontri in occasione di visite familiari, concentrandosi sulle dinamiche relazionali tra le tre generazioni e mettendo in luce le tensioni – a tratti esplicite, a tratti sottili – che emergono tra memorie e visioni della vita. A far da sfondo sono le abitazioni dei protagonisti, in particolare la casa del nonno, uno spazio domestico segnato da memorie divergenti, tensioni latenti e conflitti aperti legati alla lingua, alla tradizione e alla continuità culturale.

La narrazione in terza persona, condotta con stile sobrio, distaccato ma attento ai dettagli, restituisce i dialoghi e i silenzi, i gesti minimi e le fratture affettive che attraversano i personaggi. In modo graduale e controllato, viene preparato il conflitto centrale: la questione del nome da dare al nascituro.

[2] Megged 1963, 127.

> Qualche giorno dopo, quando Rachel andò a casa loro e le dissero della visita a sorpresa del nonno, non ne fu stupita. «Ah, non sapete a cosa sta pensando tutto il tempo, in questi giorni. Da quando gli ho detto che state per avere un bambino… Ha un solo desiderio: che se sarà maschio, prenda il nome di… suo nipote».
> «Mendele?», esclamò Raya, scoppiando involontariamente a ridere. Yehuda sorrise come si sorride delle innocue stravaganze dei vecchi.[3]

La proposta del nonno Ziskind di chiamare il nascituro Mendele, in memoria del nipote scomparso nella Shoah, viene immediatamente respinta dalla giovane coppia. Percepito alla stregua di un'anomalia linguistica e affettiva, il nome Mendele non può essere neppure preso seriamente in considerazione come una possibilità. «Follia. Il bimbo sarebbe infelice per tutta la vita», osserva Yehuda senza sentire il bisogno di aggiungere altro, con la certezza di chi afferma un'ovvietà. Raya, implicitamente d'accordo, si limita a esprimere la propria preoccupazione per il fatto che il nonno non sarà in grado di comprendere il loro netto rifiuto.[4]

I giovani sposi hanno già optato per il nome: Osnat in caso di nascita di una bambina, Ehud se il bambino sarà maschio. Il netto rifiuto del nome Mendele, apparentemente immotivato o motivato unicamente da gusti personali o tendenze effimere, non si configura come una mera questione soggettiva. Si tratta, al contrario, della conseguenza di un fenomeno che investe strutture profonde di appartenenza linguistica e sociale, memoria storica e identità culturale.

La scelta dei nomi Osnat ed Ehud si inserisce infatti nella generale tendenza a rifiutare i nomi tipicamente usati dagli ebrei della diaspora in favore dei "nuovi" nomi ebraici. Nella cornice generale della costruzione di un *Altneuland*,[5] quest'ultima categoria può includere nomi tutt'altro che nuovi, come nel caso

[3] Ivi, 133-134.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Titolo di un romanzo utopico del 1902 scritto dal padre del sionismo Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland* (in tedesco, "Terra vecchio-nuova") riassume la sintesi tra antico e nuovo a cui si ispirava il progetto di costruzione di una nuova identità ebraica in Terra di Israele.

dei due nomi scelti per il nascituro: Osnat è la moglie egizia di Giuseppe menzionata in Genesi 41:45 (Asenat nelle versioni italiane della Bibbia), mentre Ehud è l'eroe che libera Israele dal dominio del re moabita Eglon (Giudici 3:12-30).

In uno studio fondamentale sulla costruzione della cultura israeliana, Oz Almog illustra le origini e le caratteristiche dei "nuovi nomi ebraici [che] divennero un simbolo sionista di distinzione tra gli ebrei della diaspora e gli ebrei della Terra d'Israele".[6] I nomi più popolari, tipicamente associati a personalità e personaggi sabra, erano Dani, Uri e Uzi, comuni nelle pubblicazioni destinate all'infanzia durante gli anni Trenta e Quaranta.[7] Ma la tendenza includeva diversi altri nomi in cui è possibile riconoscere tratti comuni.

> All'inizio venivano assegnati nomi "vecchio-nuovi" delle epoche biblica e mishnica, soprattutto nomi di eroi biblici. I più popolari erano i nomi brevi, come Gad e Dan, e i nomi di eroi, come Yiftach, Gideon e Yoav. Alla fine degli anni Cinquanta furono aggiunti nomi nazionali come Yechiyam ("che il popolo viva") e Amikam ("il mio popolo si è destato"), oltre ai nomi di minerali, piante e animali locali, come Alon (quercia), Oren (pino), Erez (cedro), Dafna (alloro), Tzur (roccia), Eyal (cervo), o toponimi locali, come Yarden (Giordano) e Kineret (Lago di Tiberiade).[8]

Tali opzioni erano generalmente preferite non soltanto ai nomi in yiddish o in lingue straniere, ma anche ai nomi strettamente ebraici tradizionalmente usati nella diaspora, come i vari equivalenti di Avraham, Moshe, Rachel, Sarah, Shmuel, Yaakov.[9] A differenza di questi ultimi, i nuovi nomi ebraici sono fortemente connotati non soltanto dalla carica semantica ma anche da precisi tratti fonetici.

Mentre i nuovi nomi nazionali come Amikam si basano su significati espliciti, più sottile appare la nuova scelta di vecchi

[6] Almog 2000, 91.

[7] Ivi, 92.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Lo stesso Uri Kesari, l'inventore del termine sabra, scelse Uri in sostituzione del proprio nome diasporico di nascita, Shmuel (*ibid.*).

nomi, vale a dire nomi biblici che precedentemente non venivano assegnati ai neonati ebrei. Il ricorso a nomi di eroi e comandanti militari, come il summenzionato Ehud, fa leva sulla valorizzazione della forza fisica, dell'autodifesa e, in ultima istanza, del sacrificio per la nazione. I nomi ispirati alla natura possono far riferimento ad animali, piante, minerali e fenomeni naturali del paesaggio locale o generici (Ayala/Ayelet, "cerbiatta"; Gal, "onda") oppure possono menzionare esplicitamente toponimi locali. In ogni caso, risultano graditi poiché esprimono caratteristiche intrinseche di grazia e bellezza associate ai referenti, ma soprattutto ribadiscono il legame fondante e imprescindibile con la Terra d'Israele. Alcuni nomi possono riunire in sé diverse caratteristiche. Yael, che non a caso è tra i nomi femminili più comuni in Israele, richiama sia la celebre eroina biblica che elimina il comandante nemico Sisara (Giudici 4:17-21; Giaele nelle versioni italiane), sia una specie della fauna locale, lo stambecco nubiano.

Al significato si accosta la forma, con la tendenza a preferire nomi brevi, come già osservava Almog, e dunque suoni netti, bruschi, decisi, anch'essi espressione di una costruzione identitaria nazionale. L'identità sabra, infatti, prevede un ideale linguistico che non si limita alla scelta dell'ebraico ma propone anche un modo ben preciso di parlarlo: *dugri*, ovvero un linguaggio franco e diretto, lineare e privo di sfumature, che privilegia l'azione e la concretezza. L'ideale Nuovo Ebreo è il combattente sabra che sostituisce *be-'ezrat ha-Šem* ("con l'aiuto di Dio") con *smoḵ 'alay* ("fidati di me"), o con un più conciso *smoḵ* ("fidati").[10]

È in questo contesto che matura e si esprime il rifiuto di Raya e Yehuda in *Yad va-šem*. Ma la loro decisione apre inevitabilmente una serie di conflitti che coinvolgono la lingua, la responsabilità della memoria e la gestione del trauma collettivo.

Sebbene la scelta della giovane coppia appaia sin da subito definitiva, la questione non viene accantonata. Al contrario, nei giorni successivi essa diventa «quasi l'unico argomento di conversazione» tra Rachel e i due sposi, compromettendo

[10] Cfr. ivi, 116. Sul linguaggio dugri si veda Katriel 1986.

inevitabilmente l'atmosfera dell'attesa, altrimenti positiva.[11] In risposta all'insistenza materna, Raya espone finalmente le motivazioni del rifiuto, che non si articola attraverso argomenti razionali, bensì attraverso un lessico connotato dalla repulsione nei confronti del nome proposto dal nonno.

> «In fondo, che cos'ha di male il nome Mendele?» disse a sua figlia. «Un nome ebraico [*yehudi*] come tutti gli altri».
> «Ma di cosa parli, mamma?» Raya si ribellava con tutto il proprio essere. «Un nome dell'esilio [*šem galuti*], brutto, tremendo! In nessun caso sopporterei che sfiorasse le mie labbra. Vuoi farmi odiare mio figlio?»[12]

In questo scambio cruciale, il lessico tutt'altro che neutro di Raya rende esplicita la carica ideologica implicita nella scelta del nome. Mendele viene etichettato innanzitutto come *šem galuti*, un nome dell'esilio o, più specificamente, un nome tipico della diaspora. Il ricorso a questa etichetta come primo elemento della lista di motivi indica che l'associazione con la diaspora sarebbe di per sé una caratteristica sufficiente a rendere indesiderabile il nome proposto. Ma Raya rincara la dose con aggettivi che evocano bruttezza (*mekho'ar*) e minaccia (*ayom*).

La sequenza aggettivale associa il nome a una dimensione etica e corporea: il disgusto è sia morale che fonico. La frase successiva («In nessun caso sopporterei che sfiorasse le mie labbra») mostra con evidenza che il rifiuto è articolatorio oltre che semantico. Mendele è un suono che non può passare nella fonologia della nuova identità.

Se il lessico adoperato da Raya è già carico di intenzionalità simbolica e mostra la posta in gioco ideologica del discorso, la domanda retorica con cui chiude la battuta rivela un'ideologia identitaria aggressiva. Si paventa il rischio concreto di odiare un figlio chiamato Mendele, ovvero un figlio portatore di tratti estranei ai nuovi valori.

[11] Megged 1963, 134.
[12] Ivi, 134-135.

Il nome proprio, apparentemente privo di significato, rappresenta una zona di ambiguità semantica e sospensione del senso. Ma, come scrive Roland Barthes a proposito della natura economica del nome, «esso è uno strumento di scambio: permette di sostituire un'unità nominale a un insieme di tratti, ponendo un rapporto di equivalenza tra il segno e la somma».[13] Proprio in virtù della sua apparente neutralità linguistica, un nome si presta a diventare vettore privilegiato di proiezione ideologica. Il nome Mendele può così diventare un condensato simbolico, un segno che trasporta la memoria della diaspora, della vulnerabilità, della marginalità. E il suo rifiuto da parte dei personaggi più giovani è un atto orgoglioso di rivendicazione identitaria.

Di fronte all'irrevocabilità del rifiuto, Rachel persiste nel suo ruolo di intermediaria, cercando di raggiungere un compromesso. Propone quindi un'alternativa approvata dal padre, il nonno Ziskind, e apparentemente più accettabile per la figlia Raya.

> In seguito Rachel propose un compromesso: il bambino si sarebbe chiamato Menachem. «Un nome ebraico [*'ivri*]», disse, «israeliano. Senza dubbio. Molti bambini hanno questo nome e a nessuno verrebbe in mente di prenderli in giro. Anche il nonno», disse, «ha accettato, dopo molte insistenze».[14]

La differenza sostanziale tra i due nomi risiede in una sfumatura che sfugge alla traduzione italiana «un nome ebraico», ma che la versione originale rende esplicita attraverso la scelta di due aggettivi diversi. Laddove Rachel tentava di difendere Mendele in quanto *šem yehudi*, vale a dire un nome usato da ebrei, nel caso di Menachem ella sottolinea che si tratta di uno *šem 'ivri*, ovvero un nome in lingua ebraica.

La nuova proposta rinuncia quindi a un nome in quella che Ben-Gurion ebbe a definire «una lingua straniera e stridente».[15] Lo yiddish, la lingua giudaica con il maggior numero di parlanti, era anche il simbolo della diaspora, una lingua inevitabilmente

[13] Barthes 1970, 101.
[14] Megged 1963, 135.
[15] Rojanski 2020, 8.

connessa alla memoria di secoli di sottomissione e al recente trauma collettivo della Shoah. Con Menachem, che è invece un nome biblico, ebraico, si tenta di proporre un'alternativa compatibile sia con la memoria diasporica che con la giovane identità israeliana. Ma neanche questa proposta viene accolta.

> Raya si rifiutò di sentire.
> «Mamma, abbiamo scelto un nome che piace a noi», disse, «e non lo cambieremo con un altro. Menachem è un nome che sa di vecchio. Un nome che collego a ricordi tristi e a gente che non mi piace. Si può chiamare Menachem soltanto un bambino basso, debole e non bello. Non ne parliamo più, mamma».[16]

La prima frase è cruciale: il rifiuto del nome si traduce in un rifiuto dell'ascolto, e dunque in un'interruzione della trasmissione intergenerazionale. Attraverso una cancellazione silenziosa ma irreversibile, il passato e la sua portavoce, Rachel, vengono esclusi non con violenza, bensì con indifferenza. Il fatto che persino il nonno Ziskind si sia mostrato disposto a cedere sul nome Mendele per accettare l'alternativa Menachem non fa che rafforzare la chiusura di Raya, la quale incarna in questo caso non tanto una volontà personale, quanto l'imperativo simbolico di una generazione.

La giovane donna prosegue tuttavia nella difesa della propria posizione, elencando una serie di tratti che rendono indesiderabile il nome proposto. L'associazione, innanzitutto, con «ricordi tristi» ribadisce la volontà di evitare un nome che evochi l'eredità diasporica. Sebbene la diaspora non venga menzionata in maniera esplicita come nello scambio precedente, il preciso riferimento a ricordi tristi (*zikronot aṣuvim*) rimanda inevitabilmente all'ossessione del nonno Ziskind per i documenti relativi al villaggio distrutto e al nipote Mendele, che ha ripetutamente mostrato alla nipote e a suo marito suscitando il loro disagio e causando il loro allontanamento.[17] Il riferimento a

[16] Ivi, 135-136.
[17] Ivi, 129.

gente non gradita (*anašim še-eyneni ohevet otam*) sottolinea il consapevole e deciso rifiuto di quel mondo.

Per porre fine alla questione, Raya elenca quelli che ritiene i tratti intrinseci del nome Menachem. L'uso dell'espressione *reaḥ ziqnah 'oleh mimeno*, letteralmente «da esso si leva odore di vecchiaia», è rivelatore: il nome è trattato come un oggetto degradato, da cui prendere distanza. La lista conclusiva di aggettivi che evocano debolezza e bruttezza (*namoḥ, ḥalaš, lo yafeh*) disegna infine un'identità corporea non conforme: un corpo basso, debole, non bello, ovvero l'opposto del modello sabra promosso nel quadro della costruzione di una nuova identità ebraica.

Al contrario, il nome che sarà infine scelto dalla coppia, Ehud,[18] è un nome connotato positivamente sul piano storico e nazionale. Biblico, ebraico, breve, esso non richiama il passato familiare ma quello epico, non è connesso alla perdita ma alla rinascita, non evoca debolezza bensì forza. Il conflitto onomastico diventa così un conflitto di visione del mondo, marcato linguisticamente.

Secondo Fredric Jameson, ogni opera letteraria può essere letta come un atto simbolico che produce e al tempo stesso reagisce alla realtà sociale in cui è inscritta, trasformandola in forma narrativa. Questo processo rende il testo una riscrittura, spesso inconsapevole, di una contraddizione storica o ideologica sottostante.[19] In questo senso, il rifiuto del nome costruito su una serie di opposizioni simboliche (nuovo-vecchio, forte-debole, bello-brutto) è chiaramente un riflesso delle tensioni ideologiche e linguistiche della società israeliana nella sua epoca formativa.

Il nome proprio, in questo racconto, funziona dunque come una soglia tra due universi simbolici.[20] Come osserva Barthes, il mito «trasforma la storia in natura».[21] È esattamente ciò che accade nel passaggio da Mendele a Ehud: un nome carico di memoria storica e legato a un contesto diasporico viene rifiutato,

[18] Ivi, 139.
[19] Jameson 1981, 66-67.
[20] Cfr. Berger – Luckmann 1966.
[21] Barthes 1957, 202.

mentre un nome biblico, selezionato per la sua forza e apparente neutralità, viene accolto come scelta ovvia e indiscutibile, dunque naturalizzato.

3. Madrelingua e silenzio: la rimozione della voce femminile e del trauma storico

Il rifiuto del nome Mendele, dunque, è ben lontano dall'esaurirsi in una questione di gusto personale o di memoria familiare. Esso si inserisce in un processo più ampio di rimozione culturale e linguistica che può essere letto come l'esito di una battaglia tra lingua madre e lingua padre.[22] Liora Halperin ha messo in discussione l'immagine monolitica di uno Yishuv unito nell'adozione esclusiva dell'ebraico e nel rifiuto di altre lingue, mostrando la realtà di una persistente e complessa convivenza multilingue in vari contesti culturali, sociali e privati della Terra di Israele tra il 1920 e il 1948.[23] Tuttavia, la rinascita dell'ebraico come lingua di uso quotidiano si accompagna a (o è conseguenza di) un'attiva promozione della lingua come simbolo nazionale e strumento di coesione. E Naomi Seidman ha efficacemente mostrato come la rinascita dell'ebraico sia stata costruita sul modello di una genealogia linguistica patriarcale, in cui l'unica lingua legittima, la lingua del padre, l'ebraico, soppianta quelle delle madri, prima fra tutte lo yiddish. Il figlio può parlare soltanto rinnegando la lingua materna, mentre la madre è presente ma muta. È esattamente ciò che avviene nella parabola familiare di Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, costruita attraverso l'esperimento linguistico estremo che impose a sé stesso, alla moglie e a chiunque entrasse in contatto con il figlio.[24]

[22] Seidman 1997, 109.

[23] Halperin 2015.

[24] Emigrato nella Gerusalemme ottomana negli anni Ottanta del XIX secolo, l'ebreo lituano Eliezer Perlman (poi Ben-Yehuda) dedicò la propria vita alla rinascita dell'ebraico. Portò avanti la propria opera sia attraverso studi e produzione editoriale che attraverso un insolito esperimento: crescere suo figlio come il primo parlante nativo di ebraico dell'era moderna. La carenza di lessico moderno nell'ebraico dell'epoca, la scarsa conoscenza della lingua da parte della moglie e le limitate competenze nell'ebraico parlato dello stesso Ben-Yehuda

Il mito accettato della resurrezione dell'ebraico – lingua non ereditata bensì imposta d'autorità – è inestricabilmente connesso al ruolo di Ben-Yehuda come padre. Ma è connesso anche ad associazioni di genere che introducono un'opposizione maschile-femminile nella serie di opposizioni alla base della costruzione di una nuova identità nazionale.

La rivitalizzazione dell'ebraico si fonda, almeno in parte, sul rifiuto dell'esperienza di sottomissione nella diaspora, consciamente o inconsciamente percepita come forma di evirazione e femminilizzazione della collettività ebraica.[25] Questo rifiuto si riflette innanzitutto in una diffusa ostilità verso la *mame-loshn*, la madrelingua yiddish, per le sue associazioni femminee e per il suo essere prodotto ed espressione del passato est-europeo. Storicamente lingua del focolare domestico e delle pubblicazioni destinate alle donne, lo yiddish poteva essere percepito come una minaccia culturale non soltanto perché era la lingua giudaica più diffusa nel mondo ma anche perché portava in sé un'idea diversa di ebraicità, meno militare e virile. Non a caso, lo yiddishista Avrom Golomb ebbe a dire che la rivitalizzazione dell'ebraico fu motivata più dall'odio per lo yiddish che dall'amore per l'ebraico.[26]

In questo senso, il racconto di Megged rende visibile un ordine simbolico in cui la *mame-loshn* è silenziata, la voce femminile è marginalizzata e la memoria diasporica è istituzionalmente espulsa. Significativamente, la parola *yiddish* non è mai pronunciata dai personaggi e non è mai menzionata esplicitamente nella narrazione. La sua esclusione, un'assenza lessicale che è grammatica del rifiuto, diventa più eloquente della presenza.

Metonimia di questa lingua è il nome Mendele, il cui suono è trattato come inassimilabile («In nessun caso sopporterei che

rendevano le interazioni familiari particolarmente complicate. Il piccolo Ben-Tsiyon (in seguito Itamar Ben-Avi) non parlò fino ai quattro anni di età (cfr. Seidman 1997, 103-115). Indipendentemente dall'effettiva influenza della sua opera, Ben-Yehuda è comunemente considerato il fondatore dell'ebraico moderno e commemorato da una delle strade principali di ogni città israeliana.

[25] Seidman 1997, 110.

[26] *Ibid.*

sfiorasse le mie labbra»). Raya non contesta il significato del nome, ma la sua esistenza sonora. È lo stesso meccanismo che, su scala storica, ha portato alla marginalizzazione del parlato diasporico all'interno della fonologia israeliana.

Già a partire da Ben-Yehuda, la rivitalizzazione dell'ebraico comportava un dibattito sulla corretta pronuncia e tale dibattito presentava anche connotazioni di genere. L'accento ashkenazita era associato a tratti di debolezza e femminilità, considerato quindi inadatto a una lingua che doveva essere «da pionieri, dura, forte, maschile».[27] Jabotinsky si spingeva oltre, associando esplicitamente l'ebraico parlato dalle donne a una mentalità negativa, mentre il nuovo linguaggio sostenuto da lui e da altri avrebbe dovuto liberarsi di presunti toni piagnucolosi che ricordavano il ghetto.[28] Ciò che si richiedeva, quindi, era più di un semplice cambiamento linguistico: era un nuovo comportamento chiaramente espresso dal linguaggio.

La pronuncia sefardita fu pertanto adottata (in realtà, in un sistema misto) dai pionieri ashkenaziti non soltanto perché percepita come più autentica, ma anche perché lontana da un ebraico con inflessione yiddish associato a tratti negativi della diaspora e percepito come poco virile. Collocandosi pienamente all'interno del progetto di costruzione nazionale e di formazione di una nuova identità culturale, anche l'adozione ufficiale della pronuncia sefardita fu dunque una scelta ideologica e politica, non filologica.

Costruito su un ritmo più spezzato, diretto, assertivo, il nuovo linguaggio tende al comando e all'azione. Nel racconto, l'opposizione tra Mendele ed Ehud si gioca anche su questo piano, tra la desinenza ipocoristica del primo e il carattere secco, foneticamente concluso del secondo. Raya incarna quest'ultimo registro. I suoi interventi sono brevi, perentori, privi di modulazione sentimentale. Non c'è spazio per l'argomentazione, ma soltanto per l'affermazione. Quando rifiuta Mendele, non lo fa spiegando: lo esclude con il corpo, con la voce, con la bocca.

[27] Harshav 1993, 163.
[28] Seidman 1997, 113.

La fonologia diventa così un campo di tensione tra le identità. Il nome Mendele, con il suo vezzeggiativo e il tono dimesso della diaspora, richiama un universo sonoro che non ha più cittadinanza. Il nome Ehud è invece costruito per essere pronunciato facilmente nella nuova fonetica dell'ebraico israeliano. La selezione onomastica si allinea dunque alla selezione fonetica. È in questo quadro che va compreso il rifiuto di Raya: esso non è un rifiuto della memoria, bensì della voce che la trasmette. Non si vuole soltanto dimenticare chi era Mendele. Si vuole dimenticare come si pronuncia.

La nuova lingua, dunque, non nasce soltanto su una grammatica diversa, ma anche su una fonologia epurata, con suoni inaccettabili, dunque esclusi, poiché portatori di una memoria sonora. Il trauma linguistico della Shoah non si esprime nel silenzio, ma piuttosto nella cancellazione selettiva di ciò che è impronunciabile.

Nel racconto, la figura del nonno Ziskind rappresenta molto più di un testimone sopravvissuto. Egli è portatore di una lingua e di un universo culturale che la nuova generazione non riconosce più come proprie. E la sua proposta di assegnare al nascituro il nome del defunto nipote Mendele costituisce una richiesta di continuità, un tentativo di saldare un'interruzione storica attraverso la lingua. Il suo fallimento è il segno più evidente del rifiuto – non soltanto personale, ma collettivo – di un passato che non trova più cittadinanza nel discorso familiare e culturale.

Ziskind è rappresentato come un uomo fragile, talvolta confuso, la cui voce si smarrisce nei ricordi. Allo stesso tempo, è l'unico personaggio che insiste sulla necessità di ricordare e nominare. Il suo è un tentativo di assicurare la continuità generazionale e di erigere un monumento in memoria del nipote assassinato. Un memoriale, dunque, ovvero uno *yad va-šem*, letteralmente «una mano e un nome», nell'espressione biblica (Isaia 56:5) che dà il titolo al racconto e che contiene in sé il nucleo centrale del conflitto, il nome.[29]

[29] Yad Vashem è anche il nome dell'ente israeliano per la memoria della Shoah, fondato nel 1953, e del celebre museo, aperto a Gerusalemme quattro anni dopo.

L'insistenza di Ziskind sulla necessità della memoria e della continuità lo conduce fino allo scontro aperto con Yehuda, che invece insiste sulla differenza tra Israele e il vecchio mondo, rispettivamente «qui» (*kan*) e «là» (*šam*), e sull'assenza di legami della nuova generazione con il vecchio mondo.[30] Raya, nelle discussioni con la madre, evidenzia come l'obbligo della memoria possa costituire un fardello.

> «Ma io non voglio ricordare continuamente quelle cose terribili, mamma. Non è possibile che questo ricordo si aggiri sempre per la casa e che un povero bambino debba portarselo addosso!»
> Rachel comprendeva perfettamente (…) Tuttavia disse in un sussurro, come tra sé:
> «Non so… A volte mi sembra che non sia il nonno ad avere problemi di memoria, ma noi. Tutti noi».[31]

Questa inversione segnala la natura collettiva del trauma. La «malattia della dimenticanza» (*maḥalat ha-šikḥah*) non è la confusione senile del sopravvissuto, ma il risultato di una attiva rimozione sociale e linguistica. Ziskind non è l'unico a dimenticare: è il solo a ricordare. E il fatto che non venga ascoltato – che la voce della memoria si perda – indica che il problema non è la memoria individuale, ma l'impossibilità di farne discorso comune.

Come osservano Felman e Laub, il trauma non si configura come un semplice ricordo del passato, ma come un evento che non può essere pienamente narrato, rappresentato o compreso al momento in cui accade, e che per questo «continua nel presente» e si impone come «attuale sotto ogni aspetto».[32] L'evento traumatico, proprio nella misura in cui sfugge alla narrazione, compromette la possibilità stessa di inserirlo in una memoria condivisa. Il trauma si definisce quindi non per ciò che viene ricordato, ma per ciò che resiste all'integrazione nella storia comunicabile.

[30] Megged 1963, 136-139.
[31] Ivi, 136.
[32] Felman – Laub 1992, 69.

4. Conclusione

Attraverso il gesto narrativo del rifiuto di un nome, *Yad va-šem* di Aharon Megged costruisce una riflessione stratificata su lingua, memoria e identità nella società israeliana degli anni immediatamente successivi all'Indipendenza. Il nome Mendele, mai assegnato, diventa il fulcro simbolico di una frattura: da un lato una cultura ebraica diasporica fondata sulla continuità, dall'altro lato una cultura israeliana fondata sulla costruzione di una nuova identità e sull'oblio di ciò che non rientra nel discorso nazionale.

L'analisi ha mostrato come nel racconto questa frattura si manifesti a vari livelli: semantico, fonologico, simbolico. Il nome proprio agisce come segno di appartenenza e di esclusione; la fonologia diventa criterio ideologico di legittimazione; il silenzio si fa dispositivo narrativo attraverso cui il testo rende visibile ciò che la società vuole rimuovere. La voce del nonno, le proposte della madre, la lingua taciuta – lo yiddish mai nominato – delineano un paesaggio sonoro svuotato, ma non pacificato.

Nel contesto di una pianificazione linguistica e di una ricostruzione culturale post-traumatica, *Yad va-šem* mostra con precisione quasi didascalica i meccanismi del rifiuto. Il nome che non viene detto resta come spazio di lutto non elaborato, come resto linguistico, come trauma che si articola non nel ricordo, ma nell'impossibilità di pronunciare.

Il linguaggio del racconto, nel suo equilibrio tra parola e omissione, suggerisce che non è l'assenza di memoria a generare l'oblio, ma la sua esclusione dal linguaggio. È in questa zona grigia – dove la lingua tace, ma i fantasmi restano – che Megged colloca la memoria di un mondo perduto.

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