



Kerwan

International Journal of Afro-Asiatic Studies

25/1

2021

KERVAN - International Journal of Afro-Asiatic Studies

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ISSN:

1825-263X

Cover by Marta Tosco

Kervan

25/1

(2021)

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Bryan De Notariis

Articles

Ritual practices, hypnotic suggestions and trance-like states in Swahili written literature

Cristina Nicolini

This article suggests an interdisciplinary analysis of Swahili written literature from Tanzania through the principles of hypnosis, such as trance-like states, post-hypnotic suggestions, therapeutic metaphors and negative autohypnosis, produced during the performance of traditional ritual practices such as initiation rituals and witchcraft acts. The objective is to illustrate how the hypnotic trance, induced by ritual performances, can be interpreted as a channel to convey Afrocentric knowledge and wisdom. The selected fictional works explored are the following two novels and four plays: *Mwendo* (Lema 2004), *Mirathi ya Hatari* (Mung'ong'o 2016), *Embe Dodo* (Makukula 2015), *Kija: Chungu cha Mwanamwari wa Giningi* (Kitogo 2009), *Kivuli Kinaishi* (Mohamed 1990) and *Ngoma ya Ng'wanamalundi* (Mbogo 2008).

Keywords: Swahili literature; post-hypnotic suggestions; trance-like states; witchcraft; rites of passage; hypnosis; epistemology; Afrocentric knowledge.

1. Introduction

In this article, I am suggesting an experimental analysis of Swahili literature, which involves a field of research, namely *mila za jadi* or traditional ritual practices in Tanzania, which I have been investigating alongside my focus of interest that is an interdisciplinary analysis of Swahili literature on HIV/AIDS.

My interest in traditional ritual started during my second fieldwork experience¹ in Tanzania in 2014 – 2015, when, while conducting research on HIV/AIDS in Swahili literature, I was also “initiated” to *unyago*, the rites of passage into adulthood for young women.

¹ I have been awarded fieldwork research grants three times during my student career. Firstly, I was awarded twice during my Bachelor's (2011 - 2012) and Master's (2014 - 2015) degrees of the exchange student scholarship awarded by “L'Orientale” University of Naples under the bilateral agreement between “L'Orientale” and the University of Dar es Salaam. Then, I had an approved fieldwork during my PhD degree (2018 - 2019) approved by the School of Oriental and African Languages of London.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge Dr Shani Omari and Prof Magabyuso Mulokozi from the University of Dar es Salaam for their lectures on the topic. I am also grateful to the old *somo* or *kungwi* (the *unyago* instructor), who agreed not only to be interviewed² but also to give me permission to attend a performance as a participant observer. This performance was performed during the period of *kumbi*, maidens' isolation, which was part of the *unyago* ritual taking place in her village in that period.

In fact, in December 2014, I visited this tiny rural village, Mtepera, which is part of the Kilwa district among the wonderful landscapes between the ocean and the forests that characterize the Kilwa region, located on the south-eastern coast of Tanzania.

On the 29th of December, I attended a *tambiko* performance, which implies the invocation of *mizimu*, ancestors' spirits (Mbiti 2010; 2011; Ruel 1997; Swantz 1986; Swantz 1990; Giles 1996) to whom people perform offers in exchange of their *baraka*, benediction and protection, so as to ensure a safe transition or passage for the initiands. During that dance performance the women reached an ecstatic trance-like state by repeating the following refrain: *ngongole ngongole ngongolioko upile* ("Angels, good spirits of our ancestors, come, come here where you are needed"). The songs were sung in *kingindo*³ the native language of the local ethnic group of the Ngindo inhabiting that region.

After this experience, I investigated the *unyago* rituals through the lenses of Ericksonian hypnosis (Dargenio and Nicolini 2017), examining how the hypnotic suggestions imparted during the ritual trance can be recalled by post-hypnotic suggestions, even many years after the ritual performance, becoming an effective form of STIs (sexually transmitted infections) prevention.

Hypnosis is a well-known ancient practice connected to magic and rituals, which was completely redefined by the psychiatrist Milton Erickson (1901 – 1980) as a clinical practice. By hypnotic trance, we mean: "a cognitive state, which is characterized by "focused attention," resulting from both a reduced awareness of the surrounding environment, and a sharpened openness to accept suggestions" (Mammini 2018: 20; Granone 1989). In fact, it has been demonstrated that behavioural changes can be produced by means of metaphorical storytelling and teaching tales conveyed during hypnotic trance (Erickson 1983; Haley 1993).

Here, I dare to conduct a peculiar analysis of selected titles of Swahili written literature, namely plays and novels, in which traditional ritual practices and their component elements (songs, storytelling, myths and metaphors) are described. I argue that those ritual practices are instruments

² Interviewed on the 29th of December 2014, Mtepera village (Kilwa District).

³ Ethnologue: Ngindo [NNQ].

used to induce hypnotic trances in which therapeutic metaphors (Gordon 1992) and hypnotic suggestions (Erickson et al 1979) are embedded.

Thus, the aim of this experimental and multidisciplinary research is to highlight how Swahili literature describes traditional forms of trance-like states that articulate hypnotic suggestions and what are the specific aims of these suggestions.

2. Ritual practices, hypnosis and literature

In this section, I am going to provide a short description of, firstly, life-cycle rituals, not only initiation rites, but also healing practices involving divination and witchcraft; secondly, the principles of Ericksonian hypnosis; and, finally, how both rituals and hypnosis enter into Swahili literature.

Jando and *unyago* (Mamuya 1975; Swantz 1986) are the rites of passage for adolescent young boys and girls respectively, which mark the transition into adulthood. Those rites are the traditional customs passed on through generations, which consist in teachings aimed to prepare the initiands to take the right role in their family and in society. The main teachings are taught during the phase of isolation (*kumbi*) or liminality (Turner 1967; 1969) when the *mwali*, young initiand, is separated from both parents and the community. These teachings are imparted by the leading figures of initiation rituals, *somo*, *kungwi* or *ngariba*, who particularly in the case of *unyago* – the female rituals, are the paternal auntie and the maternal grandmother (Swantz 1986; Swantz et al. 2014; Mulokozi 2011; Halley 2012; Fair 1996). The period of *kumbi* can last, according to many different factors such as the environment and the economic conditions of the family, from a few days to many months, during which the teachings are imparted to the initiand through different performance formats. At the end of the liminal period, the *mwali* is permitted to re-enter the community, and this stage is marked by the ritual ceremony of *unyago* (Van Gennep 1960; La Fontaine 1986; Ruel 1997; Richards 1956; Tumbo-Masabo and Liljestrom 1994; Liljestrom and Rwebangira 1998).

Not only do the rites of passage introduce the initiands to the spiritual world of the ancestors when they symbolically experience the process of dying by living isolated in the forest, but they also incorporate the reborn initiands into adult life as a communal way of life (Mbiti 2011). This ritual rebirth implies to share moral communal knowledge and values among the full-grown members⁴ of the community (Masolo 2004).

⁴ According to some initiation rites' traditions, it is a practice to leave a sign or a modification on the bodies of the initiated young women, which marks their new status inside the community (Fusaschi 2003). In Tanzania, the practice of female circumcision (*ukeketaji*), which has been declared a crime in 1998, is practised secretly only in the country's northern regions,

The rites of passage are an “institution concerned with regeneration and continuity of the clan” (Ntakula 1994: 96). Not only do these rites maintain continuity with ancestors, by worshiping the spirits of the deceased to obtain their favour for the continuing life of the community, but they also mark the transition of the adolescents into adulthood distinguishing gender roles (Kyalo 2013; Ntakula 1994). Both life cycle and life crisis (healing) rituals occur at a specific time and place in the life of individuals and their community (Kyalo 2013). The rituals, which are religious ceremonies made up of a “a system of symbols” (Geertz quoted in Appiah 2005: 29), pass on knowledge through symbolic metaphors (Ntakula 1994) connected to culturally specific cosmologies: “knowledge itself is a force, transmitted by the ancestors to the living” (Hamminga 2005: 67).

In addition to the initiation rituals into adulthood, another kind of initiation exists, which is conducted by the *waganga*: the traditional healers, who can either be medicine men such as diviners and herbalists (*mganga wa kienyeji/asilia/jadi; mwaguzi* or *mpiga ramli/bao*) or witchdoctors (*mganga wa uchawi*; Swantz 1990; Langwick 2011). This distinction illustrates the double faces of magic, which is believed to be the power of controlling mystical and supernatural forces in certain individuals’ hands (Mbiti 2010: 166). Since the mystical forces of the universe are neither good nor evil, they can be instrumentalised to either heal or harm (Pavanello 2017; Rödlach 2006), to do magic bewitching people or to undo magic exercising evil spirits “thrown” (*kutupiwa majini*) by angered people (Stroeken 2012; 2017) through the interventions of superior healers (*waganguzi*). The socially approved use of magic is to heal from and overcome witchcraft; whereas the anti-social use is sorcery (Evans-Pritchard 1976: 176).

The Swahili root of *uganga* means to heal, physically and psychologically, preventing or countering misfortune, by doing magic and accessing the unknown (Acquaviva 2018: 145). Divination is not only “a way of exploring the unknown in order to elicit answers (oracles) to questions beyond the range of ordinary human understanding” (Tedlock 2001: 189), but it also is “a dynamics system of knowledge, or, a way of knowing” (Peek 1991: 10-11). In fact, diviners are capable of cross-world communication and rapport with ancestors or other spiritual disembodied entities. The wounded healers, who discover to be born with the gift by experiencing themselves a period of severe ailments and psychophysical malaises, seek for a balance of power between human and non-human agents (Peek and Van Beek 2013:12; Swantz 1990; Swantz 1986). Diviners are mainly diagnosticians whose diagnostic

such as Dodoma, Singida, Mara, Arusha and Kilimanjaro, on about 15 % of initiated women (UNFPA 2019; UNFPA Tanzania: <https://tanzania.unfpa.org>). The *unyago* traditions described in my case studies do not entail any kind of female genital mutilation (FGM).

and therapeutic instruments are trance and possession rites. They establish a strong rapport between their clients and ancestral spirits of possession, which transmit an “incarnate memory” to the possessed persons (Beneduce and Taliani 2001: 19). In fact, clients’ bodies turn out to be the medium through which diviners and healers communicate with possession spirits (Beneduce and Taliani 2001).

The symbol of healing along the Swahili coastlines is the “*ngoma* (drum) rituals of affliction.” These *ngoma*-like collective rituals are a kind of possession cult and/or healing exorcism that venerates spirits as mediumship for the interpretation of misfortune (Janzen 1992).

However, “healing and harming is a salient pair in Africa’s history” (Feierman quoted in Pavanello 2017: 202) and witchcraft and sorcery represent the dangerous side of medicine.

It is usually believed that witchcraft implies innate psycho-physical powers inherited through unilineal descent from parent to child of the same sex, and that the biological transmission of the witchcraft substance is characterized by physical traits like the “red eyes” (Evans-Pritchard 1976; Mbiti 2010). Conversely, it is also believed that sorcery is not inherited/inborn as witchcraft, but is learned, and that it is the conscious practice of evil magic and medicine to harm the others (Rödlach 2006: 52; Moore and Sanders 2001).

African witchcraft is a form of historical consciousness, a component part of epistemology, and a “system of belief” (Crick quoted in Moore and Sanders 2001: 4) in unseen, occult, and magical powers that transcend human control and comprehension. This evolves in the interpretation of contemporary witchcraft as a factor for “social diagnostics” of modern uncertainties and inequalities (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Geshiere 1997) in the form of occult practices, ritual murders and commodification of body parts (Moore and Sanders 2001: 2-3), which reveals human frailties (Moore and Sanders 2001: 20). African witchcraft is neither traditional nor modern, yet it is a flexible and plural concept (Sanders 2003).

I argue that all the ritual practices described share a common epistemology of magic, which Stroeken (2012) calls “epistemology of *shingila*,” the access. In fact by performing rituals, people make offers and sacrifices, with the goal of being granted privileged access to what they wish to achieve in their life. Magic can be either medicine or curse, because whichever access you obtain through its practice, you can never be sure. The basic ingredient for magic to work is accepting instability and uncertainty as part of life (Stroeken 2012: 1). Magic can be considered a life philosophy, an epistemology, and an experimental structure which determines human subjective experiences as “living with contingency” (Stroeken 2012: 2). Finally, magic is the administration of a moral power in an individual’s hands when they experience a situation of crisis.

Furthermore, the initiation to both adulthood and the practice of magic involves a ritual period of liminality also called “anti-structure” (Turner 1969; 1967). This period occurs when the initiands or neophytes, as “threshold people” “betwixt and between” their *communitas* (Turner 1969: 95), are prepared like a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, on which inscribe knowledge and wisdom as well as moral and cultural values of the group (Turner 1969: 103).

Those rituals are characterized by songs, dances, performances, storytelling, and myths narrated in an allusive, illusive and joking language rich in metaphors, proverbs, sayings, riddles and symbols. The anti-structure is also the period when new metaphors and symbols are produced (Turner 1982; 1974).

The period of anti-structure, which characterises initiation rites and life-cycle rituals, creates a fertile cognitive environment to develop both receptiveness and creativity inside initiands’ minds. Moreover, as previously described, it includes as key elements singing and dancing, which are, by their very nature, hypnotic actions imparting a deeper significance to communication. In fact, trance induction techniques directly act on the unconscious, thus making the sole understanding of the words less central and they produce “hypnotic suggestions,” which are codes stored in the unconscious.

Subsequently, the encounter with a “posthypnotic signal” triggers the suggestion previously received in the trance. By a “post-hypnotic suggestion” we mean an idea or a suggestion to carry out a certain action, introduced to the subject in a moment of maximum receptiveness, that is, in a trance-like state, then activated by a trigger which acts like a “post-hypnotic signal” recalling the suggestion received during the trance. The “post-hypnotic signal” induces, in turn, an “aware trance” during which the subject enacts the suggested behaviour. The moment of receptiveness corresponds to the trance formally induced when the attention is fixed on and totally absorbed by an issue that is extremely interesting and relevant to the subject (Granone 1989; Erickson et al 1979).

It has also been noted that the effectiveness of hypnotic suggestion depends on the deepness of the induced trance. This effectiveness is tightly linked to the delicate conditions experienced by the initiands at the time when the trance is induced, which can be either the puberty (menarche or spermatogenesis) in the case of the young *wali*, or a severe physical illness and psychosomatic malaise in the case of the forthcoming healers.

The mechanism of the “post-hypnotic trance” action and the consequent aware trance undergo processes of disassociation as, in recalling a message recorded in the unconscious during the rite, the signal interrupts the normal flow of conscious activity, replacing the dysfunctional behaviour with the desired post-hypnotic action (Dargenio 2009).

In the case of initiands, the passing on of the post-hypnotic suggestion is indirect, through associative networks that involve using different methods connected to the subject's childhood learning path. This procedure aims to create a context which, by analogy, through an ideo-dynamic process mediated by the unconscious, aids in the search, in its own time and manner, for new solutions to the problem (Erickson 1978; 1983).

Finally, traditional ritual practices are inserted into Swahili written literature by means of intertextuality (Allen 2000) and the technique of "entextualization," which is achieved through rendering "discourse as object of exegesis and as quotation, and which makes possible a fluid and dynamic realization of the text in performance" (Barber 2005: 276). In fact, "text depends on performance and performance on text" (Barber 2005: 264).

The descriptions of *miviga*, initiation and life cycle rituals, appear to be a theme especially in Swahili children literature such as Elieshi Lema's novels (Aiello Traore 2010a, b; 2013). Indeed, children literature is transculturally rich in description of hypnotic phenomena that are most welcomed by children, who frequently experience spontaneous hypnotic status during their games (Valerio 2009; Fasciana 2009). Likewise, storytelling and "story play" are instruments rich in metaphors capable of "awakening the inner child" hidden in our unconscious (Fasciana 2014).

3. Case Studies

In the case studies, I am going to highlight and analyse the elements explored in the theoretical background, drawn in the previous section, into Swahili literature. In particular, I investigate myths, metaphors and hypnotic suggestions included in both the female rites of passage of *unyago* and initiation rituals to the practice of witchcraft. The selected pieces of Swahili written literature are two novels and four plays.

On the one hand, the novel *Mwendo* ("The Motion;" Lema 1998, re-edited 2004) on Makonde's *unyago* tradition will be contextualised among the following two plays:

Embe Dodo ("The Small Mango;" 2015), Dominicus Makukula⁵'s play, which is set in Bagamoyo, the native city of the playwright, where he obtained a degree in performing arts from TASUBA (*Taasisi ya Sanaa na Utamaduni Bagamoyo*), the well-known Bagamoyo college of Arts; and *Kija: Chungu cha Mwana Mwari wa Giningi* ("Kija and the Pot of the Initiand of Giningi," 2005 re-edited 2009), a play written by

⁵ I conducted a formal interview with the author at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication – University of Dar es Salaam on November 13th, 2018.

Shani Kitogo about both *unyago* tradition and the Zanzibari myth of *Giningi* that is also the main theme of Said Mohamed's play *Kivuli Kinaishi* ("The Shadow Lives;" 1990).

On the other hand, initiation to magic and witchcraft will be analysed in Said Mohamed's play *Kivuli Kinaishi* ("The Shadow Lives;" 1990), Professor Emmanuel Mbogo⁶ play *Ngoma ya Ng'wanamalundi* ("Ng'wanamalundi's Dance;" 2008) and C.G. Mung'ong'o's novel *Mirathi ya Hatari* ("A Dangerous Inheritance;" 1977, re-edited 2016).

3.1. Myths, metaphors and positive post-hypnotic suggestions articulated through *unyago* initiation rituals

The novel *Mwendo* ("The Motion," 2004), dedicated to young girls, has been written by Elieshi Lema, editor in chief of *E&D Vision Publishing* in Dar es Salaam. During my last fieldwork research, I met Elieshi Lema personally, who is a writer, a novelist, a specialist of children's literature, and a feminist. I had both a formal interview with her on November 27, 2018 and other informal conversations.

She wrote the novel *Parched Earth* (2001) and especially many novels for children and young adults in Swahili. Not only we analysed together (27-11-2018) *Mwendo*, which deals with *unyago* traditions among the Makonde people, but we also discussed thoroughly the evolution of sexuality in the African society, the transformation and the progressive loss of traditional sexual teachings used to be taught during the female rites of passage of *unyago* and the issue of HIV/AIDS.

As we can better understand from Lema's own words:

"The concepts of sex and sexuality didn't used to be treated as taboos or secrets to be hidden in traditional African culture. In fact, observing the proper time, space and social groups relations, sex was a fundamental element to be discussed and taught in the society. For instance, nakedness does have power in Africa, for a woman to show own's naked body means rebellion, refusing to obey to a command. Sex is power for women, who have an actual control of their bodies through the expression of their will of either accept or refuse to have sex with their partners."

(Lema, November 27th, 2018, Dar es Salaam)

Lema defined *unyago* as a "channel" to articulate culturally specific knowledge. This epistemic channel guarantees the contact with traditional cultural knowledge and practices, as she explained:

⁶ I conducted a formal interview with Professor Mbogo at the Open University of Dar es Salaam on October 16th, 2018.

“Our customs are our past and our origins. Thus, it is necessary to evaluate critically from where we come and our traditional customs, before deciding to throw them all away in bulk. Even though not all the practices can be still considered as valid nowadays, these should be modified. Each one of us has a past, a present and a future. You cannot lose the contacts with your past completely!”

(Lema, November 27th, 2018, Dar es Salaam)

Mwendo is the story of Felisia a schoolgirl who recalls the personal experience she lived, both consciously and unconsciously, once she reached puberty and underwent her *unyago* rite of passage. Felisia’s *unyago* was led by her paternal auntie Shangazi Helena Magreta and her maternal grandmother *Nalobwa*, who respectively played the role of the girl’s father and mother on behalf of her biological parents during the rituals.

Lema mixed and merged different literary genres in the narrative prose of this novel, particularly oral genres such as songs, myths and storytelling characterized by metaphors and symbols (Finnegan 2012; 1979; 1992; Okpewho 1983) as well as “women’s maxims” (Omari and Senkoro 2018). The lasts are an example of verbal arts and popular literature in Tanzania, which either describes women’s images in the society or they can be self-addressed or addressed to a fellow woman.

Thus, I argue that Lema applied a technique common to postcolonial literatures described by Rettová (2021) as “generic fracturing” or different literary genres, mainly poetry and other oral genres and verbal arts, fracturing the prose of the novel. These fractures have the potential to subvert the old-style ideologies embedded in the novel as a genre, and thus, opening up the space for new ideologies, as well as alternative ontologies and epistemologies.

In the novel, the young protagonist Felisia recalls and narrates all the stages of her rite of passage, which lasted for two weeks, namely, *tambiko*, the ritual offer to the ancestral spirits of *mizimu*, Helena Magreta’s lessons and teachings, and finally, the core element of initiation, *ngoma za unyago*, the ritual songs and dances.

Ngoma za unyago performances induce trance-like states, create therapeutic metaphors (Gordon 1992; Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Sontag 1991), and disseminate post-hypnotic suggestions (Erickson *et al.* 1979; Erickson 1983; Dargenio and Nicolini 2017), via the production of a strong rapport that links together the leader teacher (*somo/kungwi*), the initiand girl (*mwali*) and spiritual ontologies (*mizimu*). As we can see in the following excerpts drawn from the songs sung by the character of *Nalobwa*, Felisia’s grandmother:

Mfunde mtoto, mfunde
Kwa *methali na misemo* [...]

Teach the girl, teach her
By **proverbs and sayings** [...]

<i>Kwa maneno ya busara [...]</i>	By words of wisdom [...]
<i>Mpe ufunguo wake [...]</i>	Give her her own key [...]
<i>Mfundu mwali jamani [...]</i>	Women, teach the maiden [...]
<i>Mpe ngao kujilinda</i>	Give her a shield to protect herself
<i>Vita ni yake uwanjani</i>	The war is up to her in the battlefield
<i>Peke yake uwanjani [...]</i>	She will be all alone in the battlefield [...] ⁷

(Lema 2004: 49 – 51)

<i>Ujuwe wewe ni tunda</i>	Know that you are a fruit
<i>Lisilomalizika utamu</i>	That does not lose its sweetness
<i>Tena ujuwe wewe ni mbegu</i>	Know that you are a seed as well
<i>Mti wake ni wa dawa.</i>	Whose tree has healing powers.

(Lema 2004: 53)

By words of mouth and metaphorical tropes (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), the initiand girl is like a ripened ‘fruit’ or just a ‘seed’ on whose unconscious can be inserted all the knowledge needed to both elicit answers (the ‘key’) and tackle problems protecting (the ‘shield’) herself from the war waged by everyday life.

As shown, symbols and metaphors imply a representational system connected to the sense doors or perceptual gateways (sight, smell, taste, hearing, touch and proprioception) through which the human beings explore and represent the world.

Tales are anecdotes rich in metaphors, which by analogy, suggest solutions to everyday life struggles and conflicts both internal and external, between the individual themselves and the community. Metaphors are the representation of one’s own personal experience, and the signifiers are made up of signs which are drawn by a univocal cultural framework and individual worldview (Gordon 1992: 16). “Therapeutic metaphors” are instruments to gather information, and thus, they trigger, consciously or unconsciously, a personal research to cope with conflictual situations and to decode the right solution to current problems (Gordon 1992: 19). Since people are likely to cope with problems by retrieving lessons learned from their past, therapeutic metaphors refer to events previously

⁷ All the translation from Swahili to English are mine if not otherwise indicated. All emphasis are mine.

experienced by the individual; thus, metaphors result being instruments capable of breaking any resistance from the hearer part to the speaker (Haley 1993: 26-30). However, the relationship between real people and events, and people and events employed inside the metaphor, should be isomorphic, equivalent not equal, in order to be effective. Additionally, metaphors work via two NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) techniques of “Trance-Formations” (Grinder and Bandler 1981): “sub-modalities,” in other words, the representation of sensorial experiences and stimulus through which people acknowledge the world, and “synaesthesia,” like magic does (Stroeken 2012), in other words, the stimulation of a sensorial cognitive pathway which leads to the involuntary experience of a secondary sensory pathway or sub-modality (Niccolai *et al.* 2012). Metaphors are aimed to produce sensorial stimulus, which recall isomorphic sub-modality experiences, previously experienced, through a process of overlapping of sub-modality categories (Gordon 1992: 112). The fertile cognitive moment wherein those metaphors are produced is the hypnotic trance, which induces synesthetic models that, in turn, create sub-modality representations, which are isomorphic, equivalent not equal, to a previous sub-modality experience that is thus fetched from one’s unconscious in the form of hypnotic suggestion to be activated in the immediate present.

Likewise, myths, which are “an aesthetic, creative and cultural African resource” (Okpewho 1983: 265; Soyinka 2005) also communicate through symbols at the level of the unconscious. For instance, Lema’s novel *Mwendo* sprouts from the myth of *chawike*, in Swahili *mwendo*, or the motion, which is aimed to teach the importance of acknowledging and respecting cultural traditions at one’s own peace.

Therefore, as an actual evidence of the ritual’s power to induce a deep trance-like states and as a technique to produce indirect hypnotic suggestions (Erickson *et al.* 1979; Erickson 1978; 1983), I quote below Felisia’s description of the events she experienced:

Usiku ulipepea kwenye mbawa za ngoma na nyimbo. Sijui kama ulikuwa mrefu au mfupi. Sijui kama kulikuwa na giza au kama mbalamwezi uling'aa kwenye anga la usiku. Sijui. Ngoma iliniingia kwenye mwili: kifuani, tumboni, kichwani, nikahisi kama vile ngoma na nyimbo zimekuwa kitanda changu. Nami nimelala juu yake, tuli, kama maji yaliyotekwa kwenye bwawa kabla hayajajaa na kudai nguvu zake na kububujika nje na kwenda zake yakitafuta mkondo wake. Nilipagawa. Nguvu ya ngoma ilinijaa kila mahali, kwenye ubongo, kwenye mishipa ya damu. [...] Hisia za uchovu au usingizi zilinihama. Akili ikawa kama imenolewa kwa tupa. Woga ulinifanya nikawa makini. Woga wa kujua kwamba maisha yangu yanaundwa katika lile giza ambalo sio giza. Woga wa kufikiria kwamba wanayoniambia kweli ni ufunguo wa maisha yangu. Nalombwa na akina mama waliocheza ngoma na kuimba nyimbo walikuwa na nguvu za ajabu. Walikuwa wamenizunguka! Kila walilosema liliniingia kama vile maji yanavyoingia na kuzama kwenye ardhi na kupotea. Baadaye kabisa ndio mbegu iliyokuwa ardhini huota. Wakati huu mwili na akili vimeloweshwa chepechepe na ngoma. Aah, huwezi kuelewa hali hii mpaka ujikute uko ndani yake. Huwezi. Unapoona

Nalombwa, bibi kizee kabisa, anacheza kama vile ni kijana, shangazi na wenzake wanaimba, mishipa imewatoka shingoni. Roho zao zimepata nguvu iliyoonekana kama mionzi ya jua! Miili yao ilipata nguvu kama ya umeme, ikazingirwa na ule mkondo wa ngoma uliozunguka chumba! Huwezi kuamini! Mwili wangu ulipaa, ukaelea hewani, halafu ukashuka. Ulipaa tena, juu zaidi na kushuka tena. Ooh, siwezi kuelezea juu ya Nalombwa. Alinionesha mambo mengi. [...] Aliushika mwili wangu na kuzungumza nao lugha isiyoweza kurudiwa kwa mdomo. Ooh, ndani ya chumba cha unyago hakuna aibu.

(Lema 2004: 52-3)

The night blew on the wings of dance and chant. I cannot say whether that night was long or short. I did not realize whether it was dark or whether the moon shined in the night sky. I do not know. **The ngoma dance filtered into my body:** in the chest, in the stomach, in the head, I felt like those songs and dances were my bed. I was lying down on them, still, like water when, captured inside a pool, claims all its strengths and just before filling the pool up, it bubbles out and escapes to chase after its own stream. **I was possessed in a trance-like state. The strength of ngoma filled me up** until my brain and all my veins. [...] I lost any sensation of fatigue and sleep. **My mind seemed to have been sharpened by a blade. The fear raised my attention.** The thrill of knowing that my life was moulded in that darkness that was not so dark. The thrilling of thinking that what was said to me that night it was indeed the key to open my life. *Nalombwa* and the other women who were dancing and chanting had a **mysterious energy**. They were encircling me! **Everything they said entered me like water when it enters and sinks under the ground then it gets lost. Afterwards, the seed that was planted in the ground sprouts.** At that time, both my body and my mind were **doused and sodden of dances. You cannot understand this state until you experience it by yourself.** You cannot at all. When I saw *Nalombwa*, such an old lady, who was dancing like a young girl, my auntie and the other women singing with the veins that were surfacing their necks. Their souls were gifted by an **energy that shined like sunrays!** Their body had the **power of electricity** enclosed in the stream of the dance that was surrounding the room! You cannot believe it! **My body took off in the air then it landed. It took off again even higher and it landed once again.** I am not capable of explaining *Nalombwa*. She taught me many things. [...] She held my body and talked to it **by a language that cannot be repeated/uttered by mouth.** In the room of *unyago* there exist no shame.

A “post-hypnotic suggestion” is an idea or a suggestion to perform a certain act or behaviour, launched to an individual during a moment of sharp cognitive receptiveness. Subsequently, once the suggestion is triggered by means of a specific trigger, which is called “post-hypnotic signal,” it can retrieve the information that was previously received during the state of trance. The cognitive moment is the moment of trance itself, which can be induced either formally or informally. The induced trance affects the cognitive process and the capability of decision-making of the individual (Del Casale *et al.* 2012;

Ludwig *et al.* 2014). The hypnotic suggestions which remained safely stored inside the person's unconscious are ready to be retrieved by a post hypnotic signal, which working like a trigger, produces an "aware trance" during which the person can remember the suggestion previously received (Dargenio and Nicolini 2017: 52).

The durability of a post-hypnotic suggestion depends on the deepness and efficacy of the trance experienced as well as on the value and content of the messages transmitted (Berrigan *et al.* 1991; Trussel *et al.* 1996). Therefore, in the case of *unyago*, the following elements must be acknowledged: firstly, the patterns through which the messages are conveyed, such as the transmitters, who are the maternal grandmother and the paternal auntie; secondly, the tools by which this education is communicated such as metaphors, songs, mythological tales; thirdly, the language by which the songs are intoned, which is the native language of the ethnic group and not the national language Swahili, is an element not to be underestimated; fourthly, the symbolic value of ritual liminality, which represents the death of the child, who is born again as an adult. The separation and re-incorporation inside the social structure is portrayed as a bridge from childhood to adulthood (Turner 1969; Mbiti 2011); and finally, initiands' young age and their life phase, that is, puberty (menarche or spermatogenesis), which corresponds to a memorable period characterized by extreme cognitive receptiveness and openness of mind (Dargenio and Nicolini 2017: 52-53).

As proof of the deep state of trance induced by the *ngoma za unyago*, we have seen the phenomena described by the character of Felisia such as the loss of time perception, cognitive dissociation, distortion of reality in between dream and full consciousness, anaesthesia, etc.

In conclusion, I argue that an "epistemology of *kupagawa*" or "epistemology of spiritual possession trance" can be isolated in this novel. This epistemology of trance, whose ontology is the initiand's unconscious, articulates knowledge and teachings, which are transmitted during the ritual in the form of embodied epistemology, since they are known through the body and bodily perceptions (Jacobson-Maisels 2016; Senghor 1964; 1971), as well as in the form of post hypnotic suggestions conveyed in trance and then safely stored inside the unconscious (Dargenio 2009). Therefore, I also argue that the epistemology of *kupagawa* is an example of local epistemology, which articulates culturally specific knowledge connected to peoples' languages, beliefs and worldviews.

Through Felisia's eyes we experienced the Makonde's *unyago* rituals with the aim of recognising the value of traditional customs (*mila za jadi*). My second example, the play *Embe Dodo* ("The Small Mango;" Makukula 2015) illustrates the Zaramo traditions in Bagamoyo, especially the play focuses on the teachings about sexual behaviour, reproductive and sexual health education and HIV/AIDS imparted to the young maidens. The protagonist of this play is the young girl called *Mwali*, the initiand.

The play denounces bad sexual behaviour, particularly, networks of transgenerational sexual relationships, between schoolgirls and mature men, as well as the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases.

The play starts with *Mwali's* *unyago* celebrations, which in Bagamoyo is celebrated during the season when mangoes are harvested. Thus, the young girl is metaphorically described as *embe dodo*, a small, ripened mango, because young women, according to coastal people's imaginary, are bodily shaped like the mango fruit, and also in Swahili *dodo* is a popular metonymy for the firm breast of a young girl.

Hakika dodo hauishi thamani ndiyo maana huja kwa msimu [...]

Dodo mbivu mtini ni kishawishi kwa inzi, wadudu wengine

[...] Nyigu wakali sana

[...] Wale wenye macho ya husuda katu [...] wakalitoboa walitie kidonda au uchachu, maana siku hizi kuna ugonjwa unaitwa uchachu ndani ya utamu wa dodo. (Makukula 2015: 2-5)

To tell the truth, the **mango** doesn't lose its value, instead it **obtains value with the passing of time** [...]

The ripened mango on a tree is a temptation for flies and other insects

[...] Especially the **wasps** with their stings (wasps' stings are a metonymy for **penis** that can pierce the girl's virginity)

[...] Jealous people should never be allowed [...] to pierce the fruit giving it a wound or "the **bitterness**;" in fact, nowadays there is a disease that is called "the **sourness inside the sweetness of mango**" (HIV/AIDS).

The excerpt quoted above clearly shows how the use of metaphors launches a synesthetic process through the overlapping of different categories of sub-modalities so as to foster an effective transmission of the message: the sight of young girls triggers males' desire to touch them that sounds like tasting mango fruits; however, a sour taste can be painful like an illness.

Finally, the play *Kija: Chungu cha Mwana Mwari wa Giningi* ("Kija and the Pot of the Initiand of Giningi;" Kitogo 2009) is set on Zanzibar island and tells the story of Kija, a special girl's initiation, in connection with the local myth of *Giningi* with the objective of recognising women's empowerment and agency.

Giningi in the Zanzibari lore is a marvellous realm ruled by witches, who rule the living dead (*vizuu*) and enslave the souls of the dead making them zombies (*ndondocho/misukule*) at their service. Bi Mkunago, Kija's maternal grandmother, is herself a witch with the power of awakening human souls

from death, and thus, she initiated Kija to both adulthood and witchcraft as her *kungwi*, the leader of her initiation. Kija's initiation is an allegorical tale concealed inside the interpretation of a dream, which appears as a deep trance, wherein the girl experienced a highly symbolic journey, *safari ya Giningi*, into the underworld, where she died and reborn again gifted of new knowledge and wisdom.

The play is featured with all the formulas of myth telling and Swahili folk tales patterns:

<i>Hadithi Hadithi!!</i>	Tell the story! Tell the story!
<i>Ngano Ngano!!</i>	Tell the tale! Tell the tale!
<i>Paukwa</i>	It came to
<i>Pakawa!!</i>	and it happened!!
<i>Hadithi njoo utamu kolea</i>	Let the story come, let the sweetness be great!
<i>Paliondokea na Mwana Mwari wa Giningi</i>	There was an initiand maiden from Giningi

(Kitogo 2009: 15)

Kija is such a special girl because she was born after the intervention of *mganga* Ngoja. In fact, traditional healers are real experts in healing sterility and bareness, and thus, Kija's mother was finally gifted of her daughter after performing offers and sacrifices to the shrines of the seven ancestor's spirits as prescribed by the healer; Kija is indeed *mtoto wa mizimu ya vibanda saba* ("the daughter of the spirits of the seven sheds;" Kitogo 2009: 22).

This play is rich in maturity rites symbolism such as *mwana hiti*, female fertility figure, which is the carving of a naked woman shaped like a phallus that remind Plato's androgynous myth (Beidelman 2001; Fair 1996; Swantz *et al.* 2014), and *chungu*, the clay pot that is the representation of the uterus of a girl who has reached puberty.

Kija's initiation has a double purpose womanhood and witchcraft as it is illustrated in the *tambiko* invocation below, which explains the development of a sixth sense that establishes rapports between human beings, the supernatural and spiritual ontologies:

<i>Asalaam alaykum</i>	Peace be upon you,
<i>Vizuu vya kichunguuni</i>	The living dead from the urn,
<i>Jini wa mapangoni</i>	The Jinn from the cave,
<i>Leo kwetu ni siku njema ya kuwatakasa wale wanawari saba</i>	Today is a good day to purify our seven maidens,
<i>Katika dhifa ya kichawi</i>	To the witchcraft banquet

*Zimwi mwema leo ni siku ya kumtia
Kija unyagoni
(Kitogo 2009: 12)*

Good **ghost** today is the day to
start Kija's **initiation**.

Inborn witchcraft is indeed inherited through unilineal descents of the same sex (Evans-Pritchard 1976). Therefore, *mkoba wa mizimu* (Kitogo 2009: 16), the magic urn of the ancestors, must be inherited from the grandmother to Kija. Bi Mkunago taught her granddaughter through a complex language of jokes, dark riddles, and revisited Swahili proverbs:

- *joka la mdimuni halitundi mzimuni* - the big snake of lemon trees doesn't pick the fruits not even in worship places;
- *kitendawili kigumu hakina ufumbuzi* - the most complex riddles cannot have a solution (Kitogo 2009: 16).

This language is a mixture of the language of *unyago* (*lugha ya unyagoni*, 26) and a magic language (*lugha za Giningi*, 38) rich in metaphors and hypnotic suggestions, which does not need words uttered by human mouths: *sikuambii neno jicho la tosha* ("I don't utter words an eye is enough," 30). Subsequently, the post-hypnotic suggestions will be activated by post hypnotic signals in the forthcoming: *watumia lugha gani ...lugha iliyotanda wazi? Majibu mnayo. Walimwengu ingieni kichwani mwangu mnitegulie mtego huu* ("what kind of language they will speak... an open language? You have the answers. I let the universe enter my head to disassemble this trap," 36).

The real witchcraft is the one inherited from one generation to the other inside the same clan or lineage and this inherited magic has a protective function for a witch, who when feels to be in danger can call for help by awakening ancestors' spirits from their graves:

Tena kumbuka uchawi mzuri ni ule unaotoka kuukeni ndio tumbo ulilolala. Uchawi wa kununua sio mzuri, sababu sio mkoba wenu (Kitogo 2009: 26-7)

Furthermore, remember that good witchcraft comes from the womb, the same stomach where you laid. Learned sorcery is not good because in not in our pouch

Ya uchawini huwezi kuyajua yote. Hii ni taaluma [...] Fumbo mfumbie mjinga mwerevu (Kitogo 2009: 32)

From witchcraft you cannot understand everything. It is an **expertise** [...] “A metaphor mystifies a simpleton, but the intelligent person perceives it”⁸

Kija’s *unyago wa koma* implies the initiation to a spiritual communication between human and non-human entities such as the spirit of the dead and *ngoma ya Giningi* is performed by *vizuu*, the living dead; However, she is a young woman, who needs to be taught about the ways to avoid becoming herself a slave of men and about the risks coming from husbands’ extramarital affairs by means of metaphors similar to the play *Embe Dodo*:

Embe shomari mpenzi karibu tuitoe hamu (Kitogo 2009: 32)

The beloved ripened **mango** is about to generate desire for itself.

Mume wangu alifuata asali ya mapangoni. Asali ya pangoni tamu kuliko ile ya chini ya ardhi [...] pembeni yake kuna nyoka mkubwa [...] Kula asali, ujue hatari (Kitogo 2009: 33)

My husband followed the honey inside the caves. **Honey inside caves** (: illicit sexual relationships) is sweeter than the honey in the ground [...] close to it there is **a big snake (: sexually transmitted infections)** [...] Lick the honey but be aware of the risks.

A woman should not be enslaved by a man:

Dhahiri yangu ni asali, dhamiri yangu ni sumu (Kitogo 2009: 32)

My outer aspect is like honey, my superego is like poison

In conclusion, we have seen how *Mwendo*, *Embe Dodo* and *Kija* describe *unyago* rituals and trance like states full of synesthetic metaphors and post hypnotic suggestions, that are aimed to transmit educational messages to empower and protect women from risks while they are coping with all the struggles of adult life.

⁸ <http://swahiliproverbs.afirst.illinois.edu/foolishness.html>

3.2. Negative Autohypnosis and Images Articulated through Witchcraft Initiation Rituals

In this section, I am going to illustrate the harmful side of negative post-hypnotic suggestions induced through witchcraft and black magic practices.

U-giningi is the frightening legend, popular among people from Zanzibar and Pemba, about a secret and marvellous realm inhabited by witches and wizards that exists inside the unconscious of people and it conjures during their nightmares.

The play *Kivuli Kinaishi* (“The Shadow Lives;” Mohamed 1990) tells the story of Mtolewa, who experienced the initiation to witchcraft and black magic, by travelling to the secret and marvellous realm of Giningi, through the allegorical folktale told by his grandmother. The tale induces a peculiar state of deep trance, which, at the same time, is a mixture of both a dream and an aware trance experienced by Mtolewa. The leader of this realm of magic is the powerful witch Bi Kirembwe, whose power is the capability of enslaving initiands’ minds to feel and do whatever she wants, making them humble people at her service, who in turn becomes the queen of a people of zombies.

<i>Malkia wa Giningi</i>	The queen of Giningi
<i>Mfalme wa wafalme</i>	The king of the kings
<i>Mchawi wa wachawi</i>	The witch of the witches
<i>Mjua yote</i>	Who knows everything

(Mohamed 1990: 34-5)

Bi Kirembwe, the “queen witch of Giningi” does not get tired and old, nor does she die; she has endless strengths and the sharpest mind. She can both read inside people’s mind and control them breaking any resistance and stopping critical thoughts:

Nani anakataa? Nani anapinga? Hakuna hakuna (“Who’s refusing? Who’s opposing (my command)? Nobody does,” 37); *Yupo mwenye swali?* (“Does someone have a question? There is none,” 40).

The power of Bi Kirembwe is based on *unga wa ndere*, a magic flour, which according to the legend is made up of killed human body parts. This black powder can be used either as a love spell or to induce hypnotic states of trance.

Unga wa ndere, mziba kauli na mfungua kauli
[...] mwonyesha vilivyopo na visivyokuwepo
Msimikisha ukweli na uhalisi wa mambo
Hata yasiyoonekana ...hata yasiyojulikana
Unga wa ndere wewe ni sayansi ya mababu zetu

Hatutaki usayansi wa wazungu
Sayansi inayotawala ardhi za watu weupe
Sayansi ya mazingira yetu
Si sayansi ya mazingira yao.
 (Mohamed 1990: 47)

The magic flour which both covers and exposes statements.

[...] It shows what is there and what is not there.

It sets up the truth and the reality of all things,
 even of those things that are invisible and unknowable.

Magic flour you are the science of our ancestors,

We do not want Western science,
 the positivist epistemology of science, which rules the land of white people.

The science of our cultural environment is what we want,
 not the science from their (white people) environment.

This is an example of what Stroeken (2012) calls the “synesthetic epistemology of magic” or *shingila* “the access” to the unknown. Black magic is characterized by symbols and codes, which not only break a subject’s capacity of producing independent critical thoughts, but they also affect, through a synesthetic process, sensorial representations, shifting sub-modalities. Therefore, I argue that we can dilute an “epistemology of *ndere*.” The metaphorical image of *unga wa ndere*, the hypnotic powder that works through overlapping processes of sub-modalities and synaesthesia, induces a hypnotic state of trance during which negative images are transmitted and an effect of negative autohypnosis is fostered inside the subdued subjects’ unconscious.

“Negative autohypnosis” is an unconscious process which, as described by Araoz (1984: 70-71), consists in three principles: firstly, the cognitive subjection of an individual that leads them to a state of “uncritical thought” or the inability of producing resistant/critical thoughts; secondly, the activation of negative images; and, the induction of post-hypnotic suggestions, which consist in a powerful negative self-statement, resulting from the combining of both the negative images previously suggested and the absences of criticism previously produced. This type of suggestion has the power to break any internal resistance, because it is self-constructed by the subject. Negative autohypnosis is much more hypnotic than the resistant structure or subject self-defence mechanisms, because it is rooted in culturally oriented myths, religious beliefs and superstitions (Araoz 1984: 71).

Bi Kirembwe: Fungua kinywa. Rangi gani hii? (anamwonyesha rangi nyeusi)

Mwali: Nyeupe

Bi Kirembwe: na hii? (anamwonyesha rangi nyeupe)

Mwali: Nyeusi

Bi Kirembwe: Adui yako ni nani?

Mwali: Nafsi yangu

Bi Kirembwe: Wewe ni nani?

Mwali: Mtumishi wa Giningi [...] mtumwa wako.

(Mohamed 1990: 47 - 54)

Bi Kirembwe: Open your mouth, which colour is this? (showing the black powder)

Initiand: White

Bi Kirembwe: And this one? (showing something white)

Initiand: Black

Bi Kirembwe: Who is your enemy?

Initiand: My mind/soul

Bi Kirembwe: Who are you?

Initiand: A servant of Giningi. [...] I am your slave.

People, captives of negative suggestions, became metaphorically vizuu, the living dead or ghosts as it happened in the play *Ngoma ya Ng'wanamalundi* ("Ng'wanamalundi's Dance;" Mbogo 2008) to the young and beautiful bride Nyamiti, who was abducted by the powerful witch Chidama.

Chidama: [...] **ufundi, utaaluma, ujuzi** [...] jambo kubwa hapa ni kuyateka na kuyafuga mawazo ya watu wako. [...] Uweze kuyatumia utakavyo. [...] uwezo wao wa kufikiri umo mikononi mwako. (Mbogo 2008: 32)

Chidama: [...] Witchcraft is a **technical know-how, expertise, knowledge** [...] the big deal is the capability of kidnapping and taming the thoughts of your people [...] you can dispose of them as you wish [...] their capacity of thinking is in your hands.

Nyamiti's induced state of cognitive enslavement made her forget about her bridegroom and made her fall in love with the villain Chidama. However, Nyamiti's *somo* sought help from the *mganguzi*, superior healer called Ng'wanamaludi, who, by performing his powerful healing dance, undid the spell that was subduing Nyamiti's mind.

Conversely, Gusto, the protagonist of the novel *Mirathi ya Hatari* ("A Dangerous inheritance;" Mung'ong'o 2016) inherited from his father as unilineal descent of the same sex the *mizungu ya uchawi*

(“the secret teachings of witchcraft,” 2): *ni urithi kubwa ukitumia vema; bali pia ni mirathi ya hatari usipojiadhari nayo* (“it is a valuable inheritance if you use it well; however, it can also be dangerous if you are not cautious with it,” 12).

In fact, black magic and witchcraft can be used either to protect oneself by undoing the magic of angered or jealous people, or to harm other people so as to achieve personal goals.

The initiand Gusto, after having sworn his *kiapo cha uchawi* (16), the oath of secrecy, have to undergo a specific training to both master the expertise of witchcraft and to be granted the access to this esoteric corpus of knowledge.

In a similar way to Bi Kirembwe’s statement, who maintains that unga wa ndere is the science of the African ancestors, Gusto was warned:

Hii ni elimu ya pekee. Ukiifahamu na kuitumia vizuri unaweza kuumiliki ulimwengu. [...] hiyo ndiyo elimu tulyokuwa nayo Waafrika tangia awali. Lakini ajabu ni kwamba vijana wa leo wanaidharau. Wanaioonea haya jadi yao. Wanataka Uzungu badala yake! (Mung’ong’o 2016: 20).

“This is a **peculiar and special knowledge**. If you master it, you can rule the universe [...] this is indeed **African traditional knowledge**. It is surprising that the young nowadays ignore it. They are ashamed of their own **cultural traditions**. They want **Western knowledge** instead.”

Therefore, I argue that magic is an example of local epistemology which conveys Afrocentric knowledge through cultural practices such as witchcraft.

4. Conclusions

Through this multidisciplinary analysis of Swahili literature has been illustrated that written literature describes hypnosis, an ancient and transcultural psychiatric technique, which is not only included in the performance of traditional ritual practices such as initiation rituals, but it is also conveyed by folktales, myths and metaphorical images.

Particularly, I argue that each one of the four elements described by Erickson (1978; Erickson *et al.* 1979) as fundamentals to create effective post-hypnotic suggestions during hypnotic trance can be detected:

- The focus of the attention is captured by means of ritual performances, which cover a pivotal function in the life of both the individual and the community, and thus, it becomes a significant cognitive moment.

- The indirect hypnotic-suggestions are disseminated through culturally specific knowledge and education transmitted during the ritual.
- The suggestions are conveyed during a delicate liminal status of the individual.
- The establishment of links to connect the suggestions to contingent forthcoming events takes place.

Consequently, the suggestions, indirectly introduced during the trance, are safely stored inside the unconscious of the young initiands and they are ready to be awakened by a post-hypnotic signal, which in turn, is capable of retrieving and triggering them. Post-hypnotic signals can appear in the shape of literary fictional works, which not only recall the experienced lived during the hypnotic trance via nets of associations, but they also create a favourable environment where people by analogy can access once again the knowledge and education received during the original trance. Thus, an ideo-dynamic process, articulated by the unconscious, is triggered, during which the individual seeks for a solution of the problem by retrieving lessons learned from their juvenile experiences (Dargenio and Nicolini 2017: 53-4; Erickson 1983; Granone 1989).

Furthermore, I divided the case study into two sections to investigate different kinds of initiation rituals: in the first case study, I explored one novel and two plays (*Mwendo*, *Embe Dodo* and *Kija*) describing the female rites of passage of *unyago*, and, in the second one, I investigated two plays and one novel (*Kivuli Kinaishi*, *Ngoma ya Ng'wanamalundi* and *Mirathi ya Hatari*) about initiation rituals to witchcraft.

Both of these rituals are characterized by a knowledge-making effect, which is closely linked to the efficacy of the trance induced, which in turn, is granted by the following elements: the initiands' cognitive status, typified by the young age and a memorable condition or moment in their lifetime; the transmitters, who are close relatives of the initiands; the use of native languages; and the symbolic value of performative and verbal arts, characterizing traditional local customs (Dargenio and Nicolini 2017: 53).

In conclusion, I argue that from the hypnotic trance, induced by the performance of these traditional ritual practices and customs, alternative epistemologies can be diluted.

On the one hand, during the trance, induced through the performance of *ngoma ya unyago*, educational post-hypnotic suggestions and therapeutic metaphors are produced and transmitted. Therefore, I argue that this trance can be described as a form of culturally specific epistemology: the “epistemology of *kupagawa*” or “epistemology of spiritual possession trance.”

On the other hand, during the trance, induced through the performance of witchcraft initiation rituals, negative cognitive images are produced, which works launching a process of negative autohypnosis (Araoz 1984), through an “epistemology of *ndere*”, which I named after the magic powder *unga wa ndere* that creates a hypnotic trance effect, bewitching people, so as to practice black magic.

Nevertheless, both of these alternative forms of epistemology of trance are privileged channels to access Afrocentric knowledge and wisdom articulated in the form of post hypnotic suggestions. In fact, these suggestions, which are introduced during the trance and saved inside people unconscious, are reconceptualized according to an individual ideology and worldview.

In conclusion, I argue that an analysis of Swahili literature through the lenses of hypnosis does not represent another example of the imposition of Western conceptual categories applied to African literature (Mudimbe 1988; 1994), but instead it represents a strategy to rise “surreptitious speeches” (Mudimbe 1994). Therefore, in a time where an “epistemic reconfiguration” is on its way in different disciplines (Mbembe at SOAS webinar seminar 25-2-2021), the objective of this peculiar and multidisciplinary analysis I dare say that is to shed light on cultural practices and rituals, which are drawn from local epistemologies, and which articulate Afrocentric knowledge.

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On the morphology of the word *tawriya* according to al-Şafadī

(d. 764/1363):

Between Başrans and Kūfans

Luca Rizzo

The starting-point for this article is the statement made by al-Şafadī (d. 764/1363) that the Arabic word *tawriya* has the original form (aşl) **wawriya*, corresponding to the pattern (wazn) *tafiła*, in which the first radical *wāw* has been replaced by the segment /t/. I aim to shed light on this derivation postulated by al-Şafadī by investigating the major sources of grammatical, morphological, and etymological studies which were then available to him. I analyse the sources chronologically to arrive at a better understanding of developments in morphology in the period from the first authors to al-Şafadī's contemporaries. I show that al-Şafadī was influenced by the disquisitions of the two main schools of Arabic thought on grammar: those of Başra and Kūfa. He was influenced in particular regarding the question of how to attribute the patterns to some words like *tawrāt*, with the Başran grammarians positing that it is *faw'ala*, and those belonging to the Kūfa school maintaining that it is according to the pattern *taf'ala*. Moreover, and precisely because some scholars assume that *tawriya* and *tawrāt* have a common etymology, al-Şafadī postulates that, besides having the same root, they also share the same original form, meaning that both words underwent the same phonological and morphological mutations.

Keywords: al-Şafadī, *tawriya* (double entendre), *tawrāt* (Torah), *taşrif* (morphology), *iştiqāq* (derivation), schools of Başra and Kūfa, *ibdāl al-ħurūf* (letter substitution)

1. Introduction

My analysis here is part of a broader project that investigates a figure of speech that underwent its greatest development in the Arabic literature of the Ayyubid and Mamluk eras: *tawriya* (double entendre). *Tawriya* consists in the use of a homonymous/polysemic word expressing at least two meanings, only one of which is intended by the speaker. The importance of this figure in pre-modern literature is shown by the many texts on poetics and stylistics that discuss in more or less detail the theoretical principles on which this figure is based, and that collect those loci probantes that illustrate

the various categories and subdivisions of which this rhetorical device is composed. One of the most important such texts is *Faḍḍ al-ḥitām* ‘*an al-tawriya wa-l-istiḥdām*’ by Ḥalīl b. Aybak al-Şafadī (d. 764/1363), which is a treatise devoted entirely to this figure. A classic example of treatise-cum-anthology,¹ the text consists of an introduction, two premises (*muqaddima*),² a supplement (*tatimma*), and a conclusion (*natīġa*) where al-Şafadī gathers together his choice of poems. The treatise has been studied by Bonebakker (1966), who was the first scholar to present the contents of al-Şafadī’s work, to place the work within the Arabic literary landscape, and to describe how al-Şafadī’s predecessors introduced the notion of *tawriya*, and how his successors then developed the notion further.

The main interest of scholars in the study of *tawriya* has focused on the one hand on how *tawriya* developed over time to become an integral part of ‘*ilm al-badī*’ (figures of speech) and therefore of canonical tripartite Arabic eloquence (*‘ilm al-balāġa*),³ and on the other on how its diffusion in literature mirrors an evolution in literary sentiment, which itself reflects social and political changes. However, I am not concerned with these issues here, and refer to the studies already available, in particular Bonebakker (1966; 2012), and Rizzo (2018; forthcoming). I am mainly concerned instead with the implications of the few lines in al-Şafadī’s treatise that introduce his first premise (*muqaddima*). Here, al-Şafadī approaches the question of the morphology (*taşrif*) and derivation (*iştiqāq*) of the word *tawriya*, arguing that its original form was **wawriya*, with *tawriya* being the result of changes at the morphological level. When I first read this, I wondered why al-Şafadī had undertaken such an analysis, and could not understand his argument. It is therefore worth spending some effort to understand al-Şafadī’s view. I will do so by studying the relevant sources on morphology to clarify what may seem to an Arabist a gross error, since the word *tawriya* is nothing but the *nomen verbi* of the augmented form

¹ On anthologies in the Mamluk era, their specificity as a genre, the characteristics of the different types of anthologies, and a classification of the main authors and works, see Bauer (2003; 2007a). Obviously, al-Şafadī is not the only author who discussed *tawriya* in detail. There are many authors who contributed in different ways to the theoretical standardisation of this figure. For a list and analysis of the sources, see Bonebakker (1966), Rizzo (2018; forthcoming).

² *Muqaddima* is not meant here as an introduction to a work. Rather, it should be understood as a premise to a conclusion, as in a logical syllogism. This is explained because the structure of the work is of a treatise-cum-anthology, where the two premises and the supplement are the theoretical background of which the final conclusion, i.e. the anthology of poetry, is the practical result, and through which those poems can be understood and appreciated.

³ *‘ilm al-balāġa* is often translated as ‘rhetoric.’ Although not false in principle, this translation can nevertheless lead to a terminological confusion with the Greek-Latin rhetorical art, an art that will not be received within the *balāġa*, but will enter the Arabic tradition by the name of *ḥaṭāba*; see Larcher (2014). It should be emphasised that *balāġa* in its tripartite canonical form is essentially a pragmatic discipline in which the communication needs and the techniques with which to express them are linked to and dependent on the purpose of the speaker and the consequent adaptation to the conditions of the context of enunciation. See Gherseti (1998), Bauer (2007b), Larcher (2009; 2013).

fa^cala—yufa^cilu—taf^ril applied to the trilateral root *w r y*, and therefore to the doubly weak verb *warrà—yuwarrī—tawriya*, where the *nomen verbi* assumes the pattern *taf^rila*, and not *taf^ril*, precisely because it is a third-weak-consonant verb, like, for example, *rabbà—yurabbī—tarbiya*. I do not want to see this as a simple oversight on al-Şafadī's part, and nor to accuse him of being ignorant of the basic rules of verbal morphology, and therefore propose to give chronological order to and investigate the sources available to al-Şafadī. Doing so will demonstrate how he drew his arguments from the two Arabic grammatical traditions, the Kūfan and the Başran,⁴ and combined them into a whole – albeit one that is not entirely convincing.

2. Al-Şafadī and his sources

Al-Şafadī (*Faḍḍ* 63) opens the first *muqaddima* by analysing the derivational morphology and the etymology of the word *tawriya*. Bonebakker (1966) does not address the first of these, i.e. the morphology and substitution of segments that al-Şafadī argues affects the word *tawriya*. Specifically,

⁴ When speaking of the grammatical schools of Başra and Kūfa, one refers to the two traditions of grammatical studies that characterised the development of Arabic grammatical theory especially after Sībawayhi's *Kitāb*. The source *par excellence* regarding the contrast between the two schools is undoubtedly Ibn al-Anbārī's (d. 577/1181) *al-Inşāf fi masā'il al-ḥilāf*, a work that lists 121 grammatical and syntactic issues where the contrast between the two schools is most evident, and that clarifies the arguments made by grammarians in each tradition. If we wanted to summarise the essential traits that differentiate these two schools and their different methodologies, we could resort to the famous dichotomy *qiyās* vs. *samā'*. On the one hand, the Başran school is seen as deriving general laws from particular cases based on analogical reasoning (*qiyās*), while on the other the Kūfan school is seen as favouring the empirical datum, the datum collected by informants (*samā'*), which becomes a rule by virtue of its own attested use, even if it represents an anomalous case (*şādd*).

To this simplified view of the two schools, Carter (1999) replies that they were distinguished in terms of induction (*istiqrā'*), the concept underlying both approaches. This convincing hypothesis is based on the fact that analogical reasoning, the foundation of the Başran school, is applied to the linguistic material collected, to the living language of the informants. However, if the act of collecting new data cannot be stopped, with even anomalous cases becoming part of the basis on which to apply the induction, then the very hold of analogical reasoning as a method for deriving general rules from particular cases fails, since special cases can always be admitted, at least according to the Kūfan view. This is why, Carter continues, closing the admissible corpus was the only way to base a grammatical theory on a certain and immutable set of data from which applicable rules could be derived inductively.

On the other hand, Bernards (1997: 93-98) argues that there was a real methodological distinction between the two schools only at the turn of the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, and that belonging to a school should be seen more in terms of the social aspect of geographical origin and of academic lineage, above all for the concept of transmitted authority and the weight that it has in justifying certain theoretical constructs.

Numerous scholars have contributed to our knowledge of the developmental phases of Arabic grammar as a science, and in particular of the two schools of Başra and Kūfa: for example, Weil's introduction to Ibn al-Anbārī (*Inşāf* 3-116), Versteegh (1980; 1990; 1993: 9-16, *passim*), Baalbaki (1981), Owens (1990: 1-3, 203-219, *passim*), Bernards (1997: 11-18, 93-98, *passim*), Carter (1999), Shah (2003a-b).

al-Şafadī maintains that the pattern of the word *tawriya* is *tafīla*, where we can see a mutation of the first segment of the pattern: the original form is not *tawriya* but **wawriya*, a substitution comparable to the words **wawlaġ > tawlaġ*, **wurāt > turāt*, and **wawşiya > tawşiya*. Al-Şafadī does not comment on or explain his argument, which makes us reflect on the morphological change in a word that we would all have classified as a *maşdar* issued from the second augmented form *fa^{cc}ala*. Let us proceed in order, starting first of all with al-Şafadī’s statement:

Know that the original form (*aşl*) of *tawriya* is **wawriya*, since the first *wāw* has been substituted with *tā*.⁵ This phenomenon is frequent in the language of the Arabs, e.g. they said *tawlaġ*⁵ [instead of] **wawlaġ*, *turāt*, whose original form is **wurāt*, and *tawşiya*, whose original form is **wawşiya*, for the radical (*mādda*) of the first is *w l ġ*, of the second *w r t*, and of the third *w ş y*. Its pattern (*wazn*) is *tafīla* like *tabşira*, *takrima*, and *tađkira*. (al-Şafadī, *Fađđ* 63)

No other scholar before al-Şafadī had argued that **wawriya* was the original form of the word *tawriya*. To understand al-Şafadī’s theory better, we should consider the two pillars on which it is based. First, the segment /t/ is a substitution for the first radical letter of the word: *wāw*; second, the pattern of the word is *tafīla*. The first is dubious to an Arabist ear, and seems to contradict the second, which, if true, would invalidate the first. To understand better what this morphological change is and how it applies to particular words with a weak letter as first and last radical letter, we should provide a brief overview of the phenomenon of *ibdāl al-ħurūf* (letter substitution).⁶

Sībawayhi (d. ca. 180/769) was the first grammarian to mention the *ibdāl* or *badal* as a morphological phenomenon involving the substitution of a segment in given words, writing the following in his *Kitāb*:

Sometimes, they substituted the *wāw* with *tā*⁷ when the first is vowelled ‘u’ in the way I have already described, for the letter *tā*⁷ is one of the letters of augmentation (*ħurūf al-ziyāda*), and the substitution is like that of *hamza*. In this case, the substitution with *tā*⁷ is not a general rule (*laysa bi-muṭṭarid*); therefore, they say: *turāt*, being derived from *wariṭa*,

⁵ Since the words that al-Şafadī uses to exemplify substitution and mutation are quoted only to show a morphological change and not for their meanings, I do not translate them.

⁶ This is the case of *ibdāl* called grammatical *ibdāl*; on this, see El Berkawi (1981: 27-48), Bohas and Guillaume (1984: 223-267), Hämeen-Anttila (2007). Ibn al-Sikkīt (d. 244/858) devoted a whole work to the issues of *qalb* and *ibdāl*, which, however, is less informative for this investigation than the other sources I discuss (*Qalb* 62-63). On the other hand, the lexical *ibdāl* “refers to phonologically and semantically related doublets, triplets, or longer series in the lexicon” (Hämeen-Anttila 2007: 280). See also Hämeen-Anttila (1993).

as well as *anā* is derived from *wanaytu*, for the woman has been made indolent, as well as *aḥad* is derived from *wāḥid*, *aḡam* from *waḡam* whereas they said *aḡam* in that way, for they substituted the initial *wāw* vowelled ‘u’ or ‘i’ with *hamza*. Likewise, *al-tuḡama*, for it is derived from *al-waḡāma*; *al-tukaʿa*, for it is derived from *tawakkaʿtu*; *al-tuklān*, for it is derived from *tawakkaltu*; and *al-tuḡāh*, for it is derived from *wāḡahtu*. [...]

Sometimes, when two *wāws* have met, they substituted [one of them] with *tāʿ*, as they did with *tāʿ* in the above-mentioned examples. This substitution is not a general rule and it is not as frequent as when the *wāw* is vowelled ‘u’, for the *wāw* is vowelled ‘a.’ It is compared, thus, with the *wāw* in *waḥad*. On the other hand, it is not as frequent, and it could have been substituted anyway despite its rare occurrence as is the case with *tawlaḡ*, about which al-Ḥalīl [d. ca. 160-175/776-791] affirmed that [its pattern] is *fawʿal* and they substituted the *wāw* with *tāʿ*. He stated that *fawʿal* is more suitable than *tafʿal*, since *tafʿal* as a noun hardly ever occurs in the language, while *fawʿal* is frequent. Among them, someone says *dawlaḡ* meaning *tawlaḡ*, which means the place where you enter. [...]

You say *tawʿida* and *yawʿid* in forming the pattern *tafʿila* and *yafʿil* from *waʿadtu*, when they are nouns and not a verb, as you say *mawḏiʿ* and *mawrika*. Both *yāʿ* and *tāʿ* are in the place of this *mīm*, and the *wāw* did not disappear as it did in the verb. It is also not suppressed in *mawʿid* because in it there is no cause [for its suppression] as there is in *yaʿidu*. This is due to the fact that it is a noun, and their saying *tawdiya*, *tawsiʿa*, and *tawṣiya* demonstrates to you that the *wāw* remains unchanged. (Sībawayhi, *Kitāb* 2: 392-394)

In this extract, Sībawayhi is highlighting the fact that substituting the first radical letter *wāw* is not a general rule (*ḡayr bi-muṭṭarid*), and it is usually applied when *wāw* is vowelled ‘u,’ whilst it is less frequent when *wāw* is vowelled ‘a,’ *hamza* being preferred in this case. Moreover, when the pattern applied to a root with a weak first radical letter is a pattern expressing a noun, the semivowel *wāw* is not suppressed, as it is, in contrast, in the conjugation of the verb *muḏāriʿ*.

Al-Sīrāfi’s (d. 368/979) *Šarḥ Kitāb Sībawayhi* explains Sībawayhi’s comments regarding the fact that morphological changes differ depending on the type of word – be it a noun or a verb:

About what he said on the pattern *tafʿila*: *tawʿida* and *tawʿid*, he meant the difference between *tawʿid* and *tawʿida* as two nouns or two verbs. For, when you conjugate the verb from the root *al-waʿd* according to the patterns *tafʿil* and *yafʿil*, you say *taʿid* and *yaʿid*, as per the case which we have explained about the fall of this *wāw* in the verb and its being restored. There [you see] the whole original form, in the falling of *wāw* in the verb *taʿid*, that the original form of *yaʿid* is **yawʿid*. The *wāw* is between a *yāʿ* and a vowel ‘i.’ this is heavy (*taqīl*) and the verb is also heavy, making the *wāw* fall. Then, the rest follows the *yāʿ*: *taʿidu*, *yaʿidu*, and *aʿidu*.

When you form a noun, the noun is lighter (*aḡaff*) than the verb, and the presence of a *wāw* in a noun between a *yāʿ* and a vowel ‘i’ is lighter than its presence between them in a verb.

Their words *tawsiʿa* and *tawdiya* witness the difference between the noun and the verb; if it were in a verb, you would have said *tasiʿu* and *tadī*. (al-Şirāfī, *Şarḥ* 5: 225)

Al-Şirāfī’s commentary on Sībawayhi’s words explains why the first radical letter *wāw* falls in the *muḍāriʿ* paradigm of verbs, contrasting the conjugation of verbs with that of nouns. The verb is *taqīl* (heavy), as is the consonant *yā* and the vowel ‘i’ between which the *wāw* is found. This is why the *wāw* falls in the third-person singular, with mutation occurring in the other persons, too: **yawʿid > yaʿid*, **tawʿid > taʿid*, **awʿid > aʿid* (cf. al-Mubarrad, *Muqtaḍab* 1:126). This is not applicable if the pattern is applied to express a noun instead of a verb, since the noun is lighter (*aḥaff*) than the verb; and, even if the letter immediately after the *wāw* is vowelled ‘i,’ it does not entail the fall of the semivowel, e.g. *w s ʿ > tawsiʿa (tafīla)*. If we apply this reasoning to the word *tawriya*, then the segment /t/ is not a substitution for a first radical *wāw*, which, in the case of a verb, would have fallen; but *tawriya* being a noun, it is spelled out in the word, for /t/ is but a segment of the pattern, added to the radical letters to derive a *nomen verbi*. This seems to contradict openly what al-Şafadī maintains, since for him the segment /t/ is a substitution for the first radical *wāw*, while the *wāw* which is spelled out in the word is nothing but an augmentation letter.

How, then, can we explain the fact that al-Şafadī states that *tawriya* has as its pattern *tafīla*, but explains the presence of the segment /t/ at its beginning as a substitution of the letter *wāw*, while Sībawayhi assigns the pattern *fawʿal* instead of *tafīl/tafīla* to the most common words undergoing this *ibdāl*? Our first impression is of a misunderstanding on al-Şafadī’s part, but is this really so? I will now try to answer this question by focusing on some aspects of the substitution (*ibdāl*), the compensation (*ʿiwaḍ*), and the specific nature of the patterns *tafīla* and *fawʿal*.

We can find some help in interpreting al-Şafadī’s statement by looking at the words of al-Mubarrad (d. 285/898-9), who states in his *al-Kitāb al-kāmil* that this substitution has fundamentally phonetic motives:

The *wāw* can be turned into *tā* when there is no *tā* after it, for example *turāt* from *wariṭtu*, *tuǧāh* from *al-waǧh*, and *tukaʿa*. This has been done because of the aversion to the *wāw* being vowelled ‘u.’ The nearest to the *wāw* of the letters of augmentation and substitution (*ḥurūf al-zawāʿid wa-l-badal*) is the *tā*. Thus, it has been turned into it, and it can be turned into it as a substitution also when the vowel is not ‘u,’ for example: ‘this is *atqā* than this’ and ‘I hit him until I made him fall’ (*atkaʿtu-hu*).⁷ When after the *wāw* there is the *tā* of the *iftaʿala*

⁷ The radical letters of *atqā* are *w q y*, while those of *atkaʿtu* are *w k ʿ*.

pattern, the way is the mutation (*qalb*) to obtain the assimilation (*idjām*). (al-Mubarrad, *Kāmil* 1:100; cf. *Muqtaḍab* 1:102-103; 1:129)

Al-Mubarrad lays down two conditions for substituting *wāw* with *tāʾ*: when it is not followed by another segment /t/, and when the substituted *wāw* is vowelless 'u,' to avoid the segment /wu/. For al-Mubarrad, *tāʾ* is chosen as a substitution for *wāw* because this letter is among the *ḥurūf al-zawāʿid*, which has the point of articulation closer to *wāw*. This example helps us to understand why such a substitution occurs in some words, and where it is considered mandatory or just admissible and actualised only in some variants. The case of *tawriya* does not pertain to the phonetic substitution case of /wu/ > /tu/, but, as al-Mubarrad points out, this change can also occur when the vowel of the *wāw* is 'a.' This seems to be the case with *tawriya* if we believe al-Ṣafadī's words. However, al-Mubarrad adds that in this case the substitution of *wāw* is more common with *hamza*:

If it were said to you 'build the pattern *fawʿal* from the root *waʿada*,' you would have said *awʿad*, being its original form **wawʿad*, because *wāw* is from the original form, and after it there is the *wāw* of *fawʿal*, then you turn the first into *hamza*, as I have described to you already. (al-Mubarrad, *Muqtaḍab* 1:131-32)

In these two passages, we deduce that the substitution /w/ > /t/ is a general rule when the *wāw* is vowelless 'u.' However, when the *wāw* is vowelless 'a,' the general rule suggests a substitution with *hamza*, as we have seen in the previous passage from Sībawayhi's *Kitāb*. In this case, the pattern of the word under examination plays an important role in distinguishing whether the segment at the beginning of the word is part of the root or not. In the word *tawriya*, the augmentation letter is certainly *tāʾ*, which is part of the pattern of the *nomen verbi*, while *wāw* is the first radical letter of the word. Why, then, does al-Ṣafadī claim that /t/ is but a substitution for an original *wāw*? Does he consider it to be an augmentation letter or part of the radical? And if the pattern were not *taʿila*?

To investigate this topic, I will turn to Ibn Ğinnī (d. 392/1002), who explains the difference between the use of the letter *tāʾ* as a radical and as an augmentation letter:

Another thing shows that in the word *tawʿam* the augmentation is the *wāw* and not the *tāʾ*. This is because the pattern *fawʿal* is more frequent in speech than *taʿal*. Do you not see that the category *kawṭar*, *ğawhar*, *qarṣawa*, *ḥawqal*, and *kawkab* is more frequent than the category *taʿlab*? What is more frequent is considered the general rule. (Ibn Ğinnī, *Munṣif* 119)

Ibn Ğinnī then continues with a more specific account of the use of *tāʾ* as a substitution for a first radical letter *wāw*:

Abū ʿUṭmān⁸ said: “With this they substituted the *wāw* with *tāʾ* when after it there is no *tāʾ*. So, they said: *atlaġa yutliġu*, *atkaʾa yutkiʾu*, this is *atqà* than this, and *taqiyya*. Their original forms are *awlaġ* and *awkaʾ* since they are derived from *tawallaġtu* and *tawakkaʾtu*, *atqà* is derived from *waqaytu* as well as *taqiyya*, whose pattern is *faʿīla*, but they substituted the *wāw* with *tāʾ* since it was lighter to them.”

Abū l-Faḥ said: “He says, if they had substituted the *wāw* with *tāʾ* in these places where there is no *tāʾ* after the *wāw*, it is because it is more suitable for their purpose of lightening. So that they substitute it with *tāʾ* in the category *iftaʿaltu*, assimilating the substituted *tāʾ* to that of the pattern *iftaʿala*, and believing that its change of state better accords with the preceding vowels.”

Abū ʿUṭmān said: “al-Ḥalīl maintains that his speech

مُنْجِدًا مِنْ عَضَوَاتٍ تَوْلَجًا⁹

Gaining a hiding place among the thorny trees (?)

it is the pattern *fawʿal* from *walaġtu* and not from *tafʿal*, for *tafʿal* is rare in nouns, while *fawʿal* is frequent. However, it is known that, if there was a *wāw* in its original form, it must be turned into *hamza* lest two *wāws* meet at the beginning of the word. Therefore, *wāw* is substituted with *tāʾ* for the frequency of its use instead of *wāw* in the category of *walaġa*, e.g. when they said *atlaġa*, *mutliġ*, and this is *atlaġ* than this. This use has not been gathered except from the reliable authorities.”

Abū l-Faḥ said: “He says, if they substituted already the *wāw* with *tāʾ* in *atlaġa*, *mutliġ*, and *atlaġ* – that if they had brought for it, then elision (*ḥadf*) and not mutation (*qalb*) would be obligatory for them – so [that means that] its substitution with *tāʾ* is more appropriate in each letter corresponding to this category in which the mutation is a general rule, for if they had not substituted it with *tāʾ*, they would have had to substitute it with *hamza*. It is *tawlaġ*, for if it were not substituted with *tāʾ*, it would have been mandatory to say *awlaġ* because of the meeting of two *wāws*.” (Ibn Ğinnī, *Munṣif* 207-208; cf. *Taṣrif* 34-36)

⁸ Abū ʿUṭmān Bakr b. Muḥammad al-Māzinī, who probably died between 223-249/847-863, is the author of the *Kitāb al-taṣrif*. Ibn Ğinnī’s *al-Munṣif* is a commentary on this.

⁹ The variant *من عضوات < في صعوات* is more convincing. The attribution of this verse is not unanimous. In some sources, such as al-Saḥāwī (*Sifr* 333), *Lisān al-ʿarab* and *Tāġ al-ʿarūs*, s. v. *w l ġ*, it is attributed to Ğarīr as a *hiġāʾ* against the poet al-Baʿīṭ; others have no attribution, as in al-Sīrāfī (*Šarḥ* 5: 223), Ibn al-Anbārī (*Asrār* 23). The hemistich cannot be found in Ğarīr (*Dīwān*).

In these examples, we understand that the pattern of the word with its specific vowels influences the morphological changes that occur to the radical letters when assuming a specific pattern. In particular, although the general rule sees the substitution of the first *wāw* vowelised ‘a’ with *hamza*, the linguistic evidence and different variants (*luġāt*) show a category of words in which *tāʾ* is preferred to *hamza* as a substitute for *wāw*. These words are built according to the pattern *fawʿal*, which is a pattern used for nouns and which is more common than the patterns *tafʿal* and *tafʿil*. But it is also a pattern that is not at first sight connected with the word *tawriya*. Or is it?

To my knowledge, Ibn Ğinnī was also the first author to quote a word formed from the root *w r y* as an example of substitution of the first *wāw* with *tāʾ*: the word *tawrāt*. And he does so when discussing the word’s derivation, which he sees as being Arabic in origin:

As a substitution instead of *wāw*: it is substituted with *tāʾ* as a proper substitution when *wāw* is the first radical letter, for example: *tuġāh* according to the pattern *fuʿāl* from *al-waġh*, *turāt* according to the pattern *fuʿāl* from *wariṭa*, and *taqiyya* according to the pattern *faʿīla* from *waqaytu*, and like this *taqwà*, from the same root, according to the pattern *faʿlā*, as well as *tuqāt* according to the pattern *fuʿala*.

Tawrāt (توراة – تورنة) for us is [built] according to the pattern *fawʿala* from *wariya l-zand* (the fire stick produced fire), its original form being **wawraya*. The first *wāw* has been substituted with *tāʾ*. This is due to the fact that, if they had not substituted it with *tāʾ*, it would have been mandatory to substitute it with *hamza* because of the meeting of two *wāws* at the beginning of the word. The same applies to *tawlaġ*, according to the pattern *fawʿal* from *walaġa–yaliġu*, as it is the rule for these two letters, its original form being **wawlaġ*.

On the other hand, for the school of Baghdad,¹⁰ *tawrāt* and *tawlaġ* are based on the pattern *tafʿal*, but it is better to refer to them as *fawʿal* because of the frequency of *fawʿal* and the scarcity of *tafʿal* in speech. The same applies to *tuḥama*, whose original form is **wuḥama* because it is *fuʿala* from *al-waḥāma*, *tukaʿa* because it is *fuʿala* from *tawakkaʿtu*, *tuklān* being *fuʿlān* from *tawakkaltu*, and *tayqūr* is *faʿūl* from *al-waqār*. (Ibn Ğinnī, *Sirr* 1:145-146)

Ibn Ğinnī mentions *tawrāt* as an example of substitution of *wāw* according to the pattern *fawʿala* applied to the root *w r y*.¹¹ Some later sources do not bring new perspectives to this discussion. By way of example, I quote al-Zamaḥṣārī’s (d. 538/1144) *Mufaṣṣal*, in which he does not add any particular

¹⁰ Ibn Ğinnī is the only author who attributes this approach to the school of Baghdad.

¹¹ On the word *tawrāt*, see Jeffery ([1938] 2007: 95-96), Lazarus-Yafeh (2012), and Adang (2006).

explanation, limiting himself instead to listing the same words that had already appeared in previous sources:

The letters *wāw*, *yāʾ*, *sīn*, *ṣād*, and *bāʾ* are substituted with *tāʾ*. It substitutes the *wāw* when it is first radical, as in *ittaʿada* and *atlaḡa-hu*. The Poet said:

رُبَّ رَامٍ مِنْ بَنِي نُعَلٍ * مُتَلَجِّ كَفَيْهِ فِي قُتْرَةٍ¹²

Such a marksman of the banū Tuʿal introduces his hands in the lurking-places

and *tuḡāh*, *tayqūr*, *tuklān*, *tukaʿa*, *tukala*, *tuḡama*, *tuhama*, *taqiyya*, *taqwà*, *tatrà*, *tawrāt*,¹³ *tawlaḡ*, *turāt*, *tilād*. (al-Zamaḡṣarī, *Mufaṣṣal* 175)¹⁴

No more explanations are given in Ibn al-Ḥāḡib’s (d. 646/1249) *al-Īdāḡ* (2:415), which takes into account neither the word *tawrāt* nor the word *tawriya*. This is the same in Ibn ʿUṣfūr’s (d. 669/1270) *al-Mumtiʿ* (254-256) and *al-Muqarrib* (536), while al-Astarābādī (d. 686-688/1287-1289) in *Šarḡ Šāfiyat Ibn al-Ḥāḡib* stresses the fact that *wāw* is substituted with *tāʾ* because of their point of articulation:

I say: Know that *tāʾ* is close to *wāw* on its point of articulation (*maḡraḡ*), since *tāʾ* is an alveolar consonant (*min uṣūl al-ṭanāyā*)¹⁵ and *wāw* a labial (*min al-šafatayn*), and they have

¹² Imruʿ al-Qays (*Dīwān* 123), also quoted in Åkesson (2001: 351).

¹³ In another edition of the *Mufaṣṣal* (ed. Imīl Badīʿ Yaʿqūb. Bayrūt: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1999), the editor reads *tawriya* instead of *tawrāt*. This could be a misinterpretation of the Koranic writing for *tawrāt*: تَوْرَةَ.

¹⁴ Ibn Yaʿīš (*Šarḡ* 2: 1381) provides a short explanation in accordance with Ibn Ğinnī: “They called *tawrāt* one of the revealed books, the *tāʾ* in it is a substitution for the *wāw*, its original form being **wawrāt* [based on the pattern] *fawʿala* derived from *warà l-zand*.” Åkesson (2001: 351) comments on a similar passage in Ibn Masʿūd, quoting al-Zamaḡṣarī’s and Ibn Yaʿīš’ commentaries without, however, listing the word *tawrāt*.

¹⁵ Fleisch (1949-1950: 230-231) points out that al-Ḥalīl calls this consonant *niṭʿiyya*, i.e. post-alveolar.

the *hams*¹⁶ in common. The *tāʾ* is a frequent substitution for *wāw*; however, it is not a general rule unless in the category *iftaʿala*.¹⁷

It happens [in some words], for example *turāt*, *tuǧāh*, *tawlaǧ*, *tatrà* – from *al-muwātara*, *tulaǧ*, *tukaʿa*, *taqwà* – from *waqaytu*, and *tawrāt*, which is considered by the Baṣran school to be formed according to the pattern *fawʿala* derived from *warà l-zand* – like *tawlaǧ* – being God’s book light. On the other hand, the Kūfan school considers them *tafʿala* and *tafʿal*.¹⁸ The first is more appropriate, for *fawʿal* is more frequent than *tafʿal*. (al-Astarābādī, *Šarḥ* 3: 80-82)

How has this overview helped us understand better al-Šafadī’s statement that the original form of *tawriya* is **wawriya*, and that the segment /t/ is nothing but a substitution (*ibdāl*) for the first /w/? To claim that the statement was only a mistake is misleading.

Starting from the fact that both *tawriya* and *tawrāt* share – at least for certain Arab philologists – the same etymology, I posit that this close connection underlies al-Šafadī’s view and in a sense justifies it. First, al-Šafadī continues in the same chapter his attempt to demonstrate that the original radical letters of *tawriya* are in fact two: *wāw* and *rāʾ*. Combining them with *alif* and not *yāʾ*, he claims to have proven that the six possible letter combinations convey a similar meaning: ‘the shifting [from a meaning] of hiding and concealment to a meaning of clarity and visibility’ (*al-intiqāl min al-satr wa-l-ḥafāʾ ilā maʿnā l-wuḍūḥ wa-l-zuhūr*; al-Šafadī, *Faḍḍ* 63-66; Bonebakker 1966: 74-75).¹⁹ In particular, when

¹⁶ Arab grammarians distinguish between letters *maǧhūra* and *mahmūsa*, i.e. the manner of articulation. Cantineau (1946: 117-118) maintains that for Arab grammarians “la corrélation *mahmūsa-maǧhūra* correspond à une corrélation de pression, les *maǧhūra* étant des consonnes « pressées », à forte tension des organes au point d’articulation et non soufflées, tandis que les *mahmūsa* sont des consonnes « non pressées », à faible tension des organes et accompagnées d’un souffle.” Fleisch (1949-1950: 233-237) replies to this analysis by arguing that “les dénominations *maǧhūra*, *mahmūsa*, en elles-mêmes se réfèrent à la voix : « éclatantes », « étouffées » et non à une modalité du travail articulatoire” (Fleisch 1949-1950: 233). See also Fleisch (1961: 219-223). We should note, however, that *tāʾ* is *mahmūsa*, but *wāw* is *maǧhūra*. See Fleisch (1949-1950: 228-229); and, for an in-depth analysis of the issue in Ibn Ğinnī’s thought, see Bakalla (1982: 129-139).

¹⁷ To turn *wāw* into *tāʾ* when the pattern is *iftaʿala* is a general rule: “When they saw that their outcome is to change it (i.e. *wāw*) according to the change in the conditions of what precedes it, they turned it into *tāʾ* because it is a strong letter, which does not change with a change in the conditions of what precedes it. Moreover, it is near to the point of articulation of *wāw* and in it there is a *hams* compatible with the being *līn* of *wāw* (i.e. soft letter, *wāw* and *yāʾ*) to harmonise its pronunciation with the pronunciation after it. Therefore, it is assimilated and pronounced all at once” (Ibn Yaʿīš, *Šarḥ* 2: 1380-1381). See also Åkesson (2001: 229).

¹⁸ We should note that Ibn al-Anbārī (*Inšāf*) does not mention this different morphological analysis of the word *tawrāt*.

¹⁹ The principle according to which the meaning of the root expressed by its consonants is still expressed even if its components are transposed, and therefore the conclusion that there is a semantic link that unites all the words with the same consonants, even if in a different order, is a theory developed by Ibn Ğinnī (*Ḥašāʾiṣ* 2: 133-139). This theory, called *al-ištiqāq al-akbar* (the greater derivation), is in contrast to *al-ištiqāq al-aṣṣar* (the smaller derivation), which is, so to say, the set of morphological forms and derivations that are used and understood by people to convey a meaning from a given root. For a discussion of Ibn Ğinnī’s theories on *ištiqāq*, see Mehiri (1973: 239-267, in particular 252-257).

discussing the combination *w r ā*, he cites the word *tawrāt*, providing the same explanation that we have already seen in Ibn Ğinnī, Ibn Yaʿīš, and al-Astarābādī. Second, if we look at the Koranic commentaries, we find that the word *tawrāt* seems to have undergone a change that modified its original form. The question of its etymology remains open in Koranic commentaries, being located between acceptance of its foreign origin and the desire to see it as being derived from an Arabic root. An enlightening example of this attitude is found in the work of the great grammarian of his time, Abū Ḥayyān al-Ġarnāṭī (d. 745/1344), who outlines all the hypotheses on the etymology of *tawrāt*:

Tawrāt is a Hebraic noun, which the grammarians forced into an Arabic derivation (*ištiqāq*) and pattern. This was done after the grammarians had established that the [rules of Arabic] derivation do not apply to foreign nouns, and nor does the pattern apply, forcing an Arabic derivation.

There are two theories on the derivation of *tawrāt*. The first [sees it as being derived] from *wariya l-zand*, i.e. when [the fire stick] has been struck and the fire appeared from it, as if the *tawrāt* were a light against error. This derivation is the saying of the majority. Abū Fīd Muʿarriġ al-Sadūsī [d. 195/810] was of the opinion that it is derived from *warrā*, as it has been transmitted that [the Prophet] “When he wanted to go on a journey, he concealed it

An interesting study of how modern phonological, morphological, and phonotactic theories can be applied to Ibn Ğinnī’s theory is Grande (2003), who, starting from Ibn Ğinnī’s postulates and comparing them with modern studies on the Matrix and Etymon Model (on this model, see Bohas 2007) showed that it is already possible to identify in the thought of the Arab grammarian the overcoming of the assumed schema of the Arabic trilateral root – already questioned by Larcher (1999). Specifically, he shows that the proto-historical root in the Arabic language is nothing more than a biconsonantal-vowel root whose structure is C_1aC_2 , i.e. consonant–vowel ‘a’–consonant, and that the shift from this proto-historical to the historical root took place in three stages: 1. Vowel transference, 2. Insertion of *hamza*, and 3. Metathesis, obtaining as a final result the historical root $C_1aC_2\partial C_3$.

Versteegh (1985) and Carter (1991) point out that, although Ibn Ğinnī was among the most renowned grammarians of the Arabic tradition, the theory of *al-ištiqāq al-akbar* did not find many adherents. One such adherent, though, was al-Ṣafadī, for whom this way of proceeding is not limited only to (*Faḍḍ* 63-66). As Goldziher (1872: 592-595) explains, he supports the theory of greater derivation and applies it uniformly in his writings. For example, in the work *al-Šuʿūr bi-l-ʿūr* devoted to one-eyed people, al-Ṣafadī explores the different meanings that the root $ʿ w r$ expresses in its various transpositions, arguing that the common meaning is that of ‘being feared’ (*taḥawwuf*; *Šuʿūr* 41-52); similarly, in *Ġinān al-ġinās*, he explores the different transpositions of the root $ġ n s$, arguing that the common meaning of all the transpositions is ‘the association of something to what resembles it’ (*inḍimām al-šayʿ ilā mā yušākilu-hu*; *Ġinān* 26-29). In another anthology, devoted to blind people, *Nakt al-himyān fī nukat al-ʿumyān*, he reduces the root signifier to the letters $ʿ$ and m , and demonstrates that, with the occasional addition of one or more letters based on the words attested in the lexicon, they all express in their different transpositions a meaning that can be traced back to ‘becoming hidden and concealed’ (*al-istitār wa-l-iḥtifāʿ*; *Himyān* 6-12). There is a need for an in-depth study of how al-Ṣafadī employs *al-ištiqāq al-akbar* in his works, how he borrowed from Ibn Ğinnī’s theory, how this process is a fundamental part of the treatise-cum-anthology genre in his output, and how he uses this approach to support his thesis.

with something else” (*kāna idā arāda safaran warrā bi-ġayri-hi*)²⁰ because most of the *tawrāt* is an allusion (*talwīh*).

As for its pattern, al-Ḥalīl, Sībawayhi, and the other grammarians of the Baṣran school were of the opinion that its pattern is *faw‘ala*, in which *tā’* is a substitution for *wāw*, as it has been substituted in *tawlaġ*, whose original form is its pattern **wawlaġ*, for they are derived from *warā* and *walaġa*, and they are like *ḥawqala*. On the other hand, al-Farrā’ [d. 207/822] was of the opinion that its pattern is *taf‘ila*, like *tawṣiya*, since the vowel ‘i’ of the ‘ayn has been substituted with ‘a’ and the letter *yā’* with *alif*, as they said: *nāṣiya* and *ġāriya*, becoming *nāṣā* and *ġārā*. Likewise, *tawṣiya* > *tawṣā* is permitted but not attested, said al-Zaġġāġ [d. 311/923]. Some of the Kūfan grammarians believed that its pattern is *taf‘ala*, the ‘ayn vowelled ‘a,’ derived from ‘I kindled (*waraytu*) for you my fire sticks,’ the *imāla* in the word *tawrāt* is possible [...]

Al-Zamaḥṣarī said:²¹ “*Tawrāt* and *inġil* are two foreign nouns, whose derivation has been forced [to derive from] *al-warī* and *al-naġl*, while their patterns are *taf‘(v)l* and *if‘il*. This is true only if we consider them Arabic.” What he said is true, except that a correction should be made in his speech about *taf‘(v)l*: he did not mention that for the Baṣran school its pattern is *faw‘ala*, and did not indicate whether the ‘ayn was vowelled ‘a’ or ‘i.’²² (Abū Ḥayyān, *Tafsīr* 2: 386-387)

These sources shed light on al-Ṣafadī’s statement about the etymology and derivational morphology of the word *tawriya*.

3. Conclusions

What conclusions can we draw from this overview of the sources available to al-Ṣafadī? We can posit no definitive answer, but can nonetheless advance the hypothesis that he merged morphological theory with etymological theory, based on the (pseudo-)common root of the words *tawriya* and *tawrāt*. To explain this, I propose the following hypothesis: convinced that the two words *tawriya* and *tawrāt* are connected, al-Ṣafadī gives a similar morphological derivation that binds these words. As we have seen in Abū Ḥayyān’s commentary, he argues that *tawrāt* is foreign in origin (al-Ṣafadī, *Faḍḍ* 64). However, he also considers the Arabic derivation, embracing the Baṣran view that *tawrāt* underwent a letter substitution that transformed the original form **wawriya*, according to the pattern *faw‘ala*, into

²⁰ Most probably *kāna idā arāda ġazwatan warrā bi-ġayri-hā*. See Ibn Ḥaġar al-‘Asqalānī (*Bulūġ* no. 1270), Abū Dāwūd al-Siġistānī (*Sunan* no. 2637). Cf. with variants al-Buḥārī (*Ṣaḥīḥ* no. 2947, 2948) and al-Nasā’ī (*Sunan* no. 8727, 8728). Cf. Bravmann (1971), who does not quote the *ḥadīth*, but only the *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* by Ibn Hiṣām (d. ca. 213-218/828-833). See also Zaġlūl (1996: 6, 31).

²¹ See al-Zamaḥṣarī (*Kaššāf* 1: 526).

²² Cf. al-Ṭūṣī (*Tibyān* 2: 390-391), Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (*Tafsīr* 7: 171-172), al-Bayḍāwī (*Tafsīr* 1: 243), al-Qūnawī (*Ḥāṣiya* 6: 7-8).

tawrāt. This point should be stressed because al-Šafadī does not affirm that the original form is **wawrāt*. Instead, he says **wawriya* (*Faḍḍ* 63, 64). This, in my opinion, is a connection to the tradition of Koranic commentaries, which report not only the Baṣran view, but also the Kūfan view represented by al-Farrāʾ²³, who argued that *tawrāt* has as its pattern *tafīla* and that it underwent a mutation of the vowel ‘i’ of the second radical letter in ‘a,’ entailing a mutation of the letter *yāʾ* in *alif*: **tawriyat* > **tawrayat* > *tawrāt*. This is all the more plausible if we look at the examples that al-Šafadī gives. He quotes the word *tawṣiya* (*Faḍḍ* 63), saying that its original form is **wawṣiya*, which is the same word used in Abū Ḥayyān’s commentary in describing al-Farrāʾ’s opinion: **wawṣiya* > *tawṣiya* > *tawṣaya* > *tawṣā*. It is plausible that al-Šafadī mixed these two morphological and etymological views. For, he maintains on the one hand that the original form of *tawriya* is **wawriya*, as could be justified if we adopt the Baṣran position, which explains the change as a letter substitution (*ibdāl al-ḥurūf*); and on the other that *tawriya*’s pattern is *tafīla*, like the words *tabṣira*, etc., thereby adopting the Kūfan position, which entails the change ‘i’ > ‘a,’ and therefore *yāʾ* > *alif*. It is but a short step to claim that **wawriya* > **tawriya* > **tawraya* > *tawrāt*.

The hypothesis that al-Šafadī mixed the two theories – Baṣran and Kūfan – is in my opinion justified if we look at the explanations provided by Arab philologists on the pattern of the verbal noun of the augmented verb *faʿala*, to which *tawriya* belongs: *warrā–yuwarrī–tawriya*. In their opinion, the morphological mutation occurring in the word *tawriya* is not a letter substitution (*ibdāl*), but a compensation (*ʿiwaḍ*). According to Ibn Yaʿīš,

The commentator said: “The substitution is that you place one segment instead of another. It can be necessary or discretionary and approvable. They distinguished between substitution (*badal*) and the compensation (*ʿiwaḍ*). They said: what substitutes is more suitable than what has been substituted, and what compensates [is more suitable] than what has been compensated. This is why it stands in its place, for example the *tāʾ* in *tuḥama* and *tukaʿa*, or the *hāʾ* in *haraqtu*. This and the like are what is called substitution (*badal*) and not compensation (*ʿiwaḍ*), for compensation is when you place one segment instead of another, but in a different position, such as the *tāʾ* (ة) in *ʿida* (عدة) and *zina* (زينة), and the *hamza* in *ibn* (ابن) and *ism* (اسم).”²³ (Ibn Yaʿīš, *Šarḥ* 2: 1356)

According to this analysis, both the segment /t/ at the beginning and /t/ at the end of the word *tawriya* are not a substitution but a compensation for another segment which has been elided. This can be explained because the pattern *tafīl* is not an original form of the *nomen verbi*, which is *fiʿāl*. An example can be found in Ibn Ğinnī’s words:

²³ See also Bohas’ translation (1984: 223-224). Cf. Ibn Ğinnī (*Ḥaṣāʾiṣ* 1: 265-266).

Among them, the *tāʾ* in *tafīl* is a compensation for the first *ʿayn* in *fiʿāl* and it is a letter of augmentation (*zāʾida*). It is a requisite that the compensation is a letter of augmentation, too, because [to change] a letter of augmentation with another letter of augmentation is more similar to the original; therefore, the first *ʿayn* [i.e. second radical] in *qittāʿ* is the letter of augmentation, for *tāʾ* in *taqtīʿ* is the compensation thereof. As it is the case with the *hāʾ* (س / ت/) of the *nomen verbi tafīla*, which is a compensation for the *yāʾ* in *tafīl*. The two of them are letters of augmentation. (Ibn Ğinnī, *Ḥaṣāʾiṣ* 3:69)

In his words, Ibn Ğinnī posits that the segment /t/ in the pattern *tafīl* is a compensation for the first *ʿayn* of the original form *fiʿāl*,²⁴ which is an additional letter to the primary root *fʿl*. The same reasoning applies to the final segment /t/, which is a compensation for the long vowel ‘ī,’ concerning the *nomina verbi* derived from verbs with a weak third consonant.²⁵

It follows that, in the view of Arab philologists, the word *tawriya* is neither a case of *ibdāl al-ḥurūf*, and nor is it to do with the (forced) Arabic derivation of the word *tawrāt*, for its original form cannot be **wawriya*. Instead, we face a common case of double compensation, which affects the verbal nouns issued from a weak-third-rooted verb. In other words, the first radical letter *wāw* in the word *tawriya* has not been substituted, nor is the *wāw* an augmentation letter according to the pattern of the word. Thus, it is not a case of *ibdāl al-ḥurūf*.²⁶

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²⁴ “Moreover, you made the *tāʾ* of *tafīl* a compensation for the *ʿayn* of *fiʿāl*. This is their speech: *qaṭṭaʿtu—taqtīʿ*, *kassartu—taksīr*. Do you not see that the original form is *qittāʿ* and *kissār*?” (Ibn Ğinnī, *Ḥaṣāʾiṣ* 3: 290).

²⁵ “Likewise, *hāʾ* in the verbal nouns *tafīla* is a compensation for the *yāʾ* of *tafīl* or the *alif* of *fiʿāl*. For example: *ṣallaytu—taṣliya* and *rabbaytu—tarbiya*” (Ibn Ğinnī, *Ḥaṣāʾiṣ* 3: 302).

²⁶ The only substitution (*ibdāl*) concerns the phonemes *y* and *ā*: “It follows that *yāʾ* of *tafīl* is a substitution for the *alif* of *fiʿāl*, like *tāʾ* at its beginning is a compensation for one of its *ʿayn*” (Ibn Ğinnī, *Ḥaṣāʾiṣ* 3: 305).

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Phonological evidence for the division of the *gəlat* dialects of Iraq into *šrūgi* and non-*šrūgi*

Qasim Hassan

The purpose of this paper is to provide new insights on the division of the *gəlat* dialects into *šrūgi* and non-*šrūgi* types, which was first proposed in Hassan (2020). This division was an attempt to redraw the map of the *gəlat* dialects after having observed a correlation between their geographic distribution and the sectarian affiliation of their users. With this backdrop in mind, the present paper will demonstrate two stable isophones that support this division, emphasizing whether these isophones are indigenous premigratory features or non-native postmigratory elements, which gradually infiltrated through at a great extent into some *šrūgi* dialects from other adjoining *šrūgi* ones. Moreover, maps that illustrate the pre- and postmigratory distribution of these isophones are also included.

Keywords: Iraqi-Arabic, *gəlat* dialects, *šrūgi*/non-*šrūgi* dialectal areas, pre-/postmigratory isophones.

1. Introduction

When compared with the *qəltu* dialects, the classification of their *gəlat* counterparts has received only marginal attention in the literature on Iraqi-Arabic dialectology.¹ Nevertheless, Blanc (1964), in his *Communal Dialects in Baghdad*, made the first step in this direction. He ‘ecologically’ divided Iraqi-Arabic dialects into ‘two large groups’, *gəlat* and *qəltu*, both named after the Classical Arabic form *qultu* ‘I said’ (Blanc 1964: 5). According to his ‘ecological division,’ the *gəlat* area comprises most varieties spoken in lower and upper Iraq where Muslims constitute the vast majority of the population (Blanc 1964: 6).

This division has also been adopted post-Blanc by most dialectologists, without any substantial improvement, and it is still the foundation on which the classificatory descriptions of Iraqi-Arabic are made to this day. However, except for a few indications of their geographic distribution, Jastrow's

¹ The classificatory picture of the *qəltu* dialects became increasingly clear, particularly after the numerous works of Otto Jastrow (2007, 1990a, 1990b, 1983, 1981, 1979, 1978, etc.), among others.

numerous publications on Iraqi-Arabic, have made no new contribution to the classification of the *gəlat* dialects, as they simply confirmed some points already made by Blanc (cf. Jastrow 2007: 415).

Moreover, in a recent paper, Hassan (2020) suggested for the first time a division of the *gəlat* dialects into *šrūgi* and non-*šrūgi* (Map 1.). According to this division, the *šrūgi* dialectal area refers to all *gəlat* dialects spoken in southern Iraq and the Middle Euphrates area, whereas the non-*šrūgi* one includes only *gəlat* dialects in the northern and western parts of the country. The notion *šrūgi* itself is a pejorative exonym created by non-*šrūgi* Sunni people to pertain to their Shia counterparts from the *šrūgi* dialectal area.



Map 1. The Division of the *gəlat* dialects into *šrūgi* and non-*šrūgi* dialectal areas (Hassan 2020)

Interestingly, people in the *šrūgi* dialectal area are proud of being described as such, that is because they interpret the word *šrūgi* differently. For them, it derives from the term *šrūgōn*, the name of the king of Akkad, whom they consider their ancestor. With this in mind, such division is not far from Blanc's 'communal affiliation' approach as it presupposes a correlation between the distribution of the *gəlat* dialects and the sectarian affiliation of their speakers.

Hassan (2020) supports this division by a list of lexical features that are present in the *šrūgi* area, but absent in the *non-šrūgi* one. The present paper, however, is a further attempt to corroborate this division. Two stable contrasting isophones, $\check{g} > y$ and $\check{g} > \check{z}$, that separate these two areas, are described in detail in the next sections. However, due to a general lack of research on the *šrūgi* dialectal area, and on this particular topic, much of the data in this paper come from the author's knowledge of his own community.

The other data were mainly from personal communication with notables in different parts of the *šrūgi* area who are usually considered a storehouse of tribal knowledge. Moreover, in this regard, anthropological studies conducted by Drower (1936), Field (1936), Salim (1955), Thesiger (1967), and Westphal-Helbusch (1962), among others, do not provide any indication of how, why, and when tribal movements existed, but rather emphasize the anthropometric aspect of people in the *šrūgi* area (Drower 1936, Field 1936) or their beliefs and traditions (Thesiger 1967, Westphal-Helbusch 1962, Salim 1955).

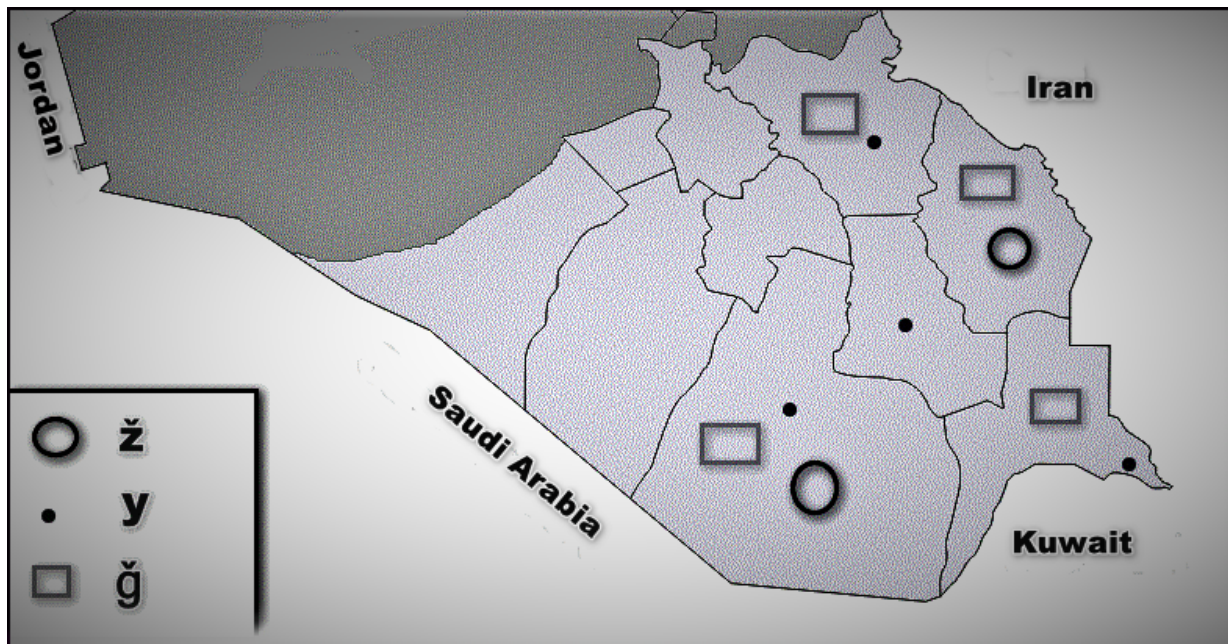
In addition, migratory movements of individuals and groups are still ongoing throughout the *šrūgi* area due to recurring tribal tensions or other constraints such as water scarcity and droughts in remote rural areas. It is consequently hard to find any reliable sources documenting these tribal movements and all events were passed down orally from the perspective of the individuals.

2. A brief overview of the state of research of \check{g} -reflexes in the *šrūgi* dialectal area

Generally, early studies on \check{g} -reflexes, albeit rare in the literature, seem to be inconsistent and do not, therefore, provide a clear picture of their geographic distribution in the *šrūgi* dialectal area. Blanc (1964: 28), for example, states in passing that the voiced affricate / \check{z} / is typical of the *šrūgi* dialect of ʿAmāra, whereas the palatal approximant / y / is typical of the very end of southern Mesopotamia.

This, however, goes in line with Ingham's pioneer views on \check{g} -reflexes in the *šrūgi* area. He considers the voiced affricate / \check{z} / hallmark of the Mīʿdān Arabs of the marshlands in ʿAmāra, whereas the palatal approximant / y / is characteristic of the rest of the area (Ingham 2000: 128, 1994: 95, 1982: 36, 1976: 67, etc.). On the contrary, Jastrow (2007: 416) points out that the voiced affricate / \check{z} / is the

common reflex of the phoneme /ǧ/ in Samāwa, and the palatal approximant /y/ is a characteristic of southern Iraq including Bašra (Map 2.).

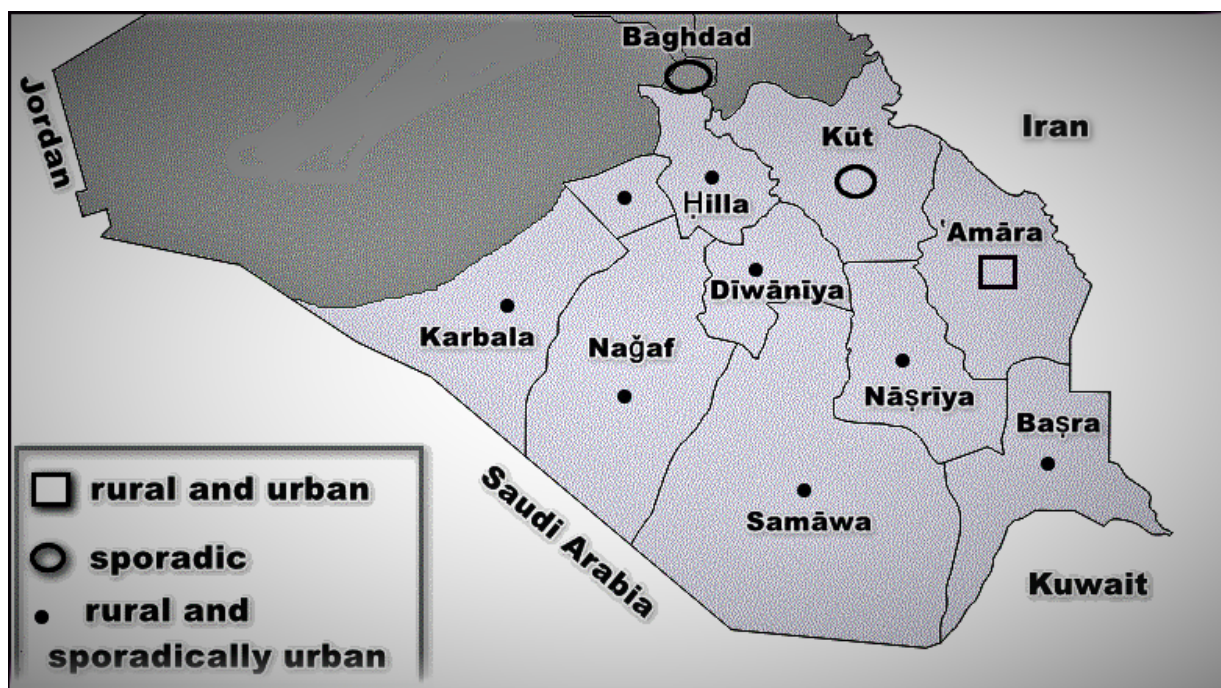


Map 2. The geographic distribution of ǧ-reflexes according to Blanc (1964: 28), Ingham (2000: 128, etc.), and Jastrow (2007: 416)

In what follows, I will first show through maps that the reflexes /ž/ and /y/ are present in the whole *šrūgi* dialectal area, but completely absent in the non-*šrūgi* one. I will also show that the voiced affricate /ž/ is largely a postmigratory feature in some enclaves of the *šrūgi* area, in contrast to the palatal approximant /y/, which seems to be, at least for the most part, premigratory.

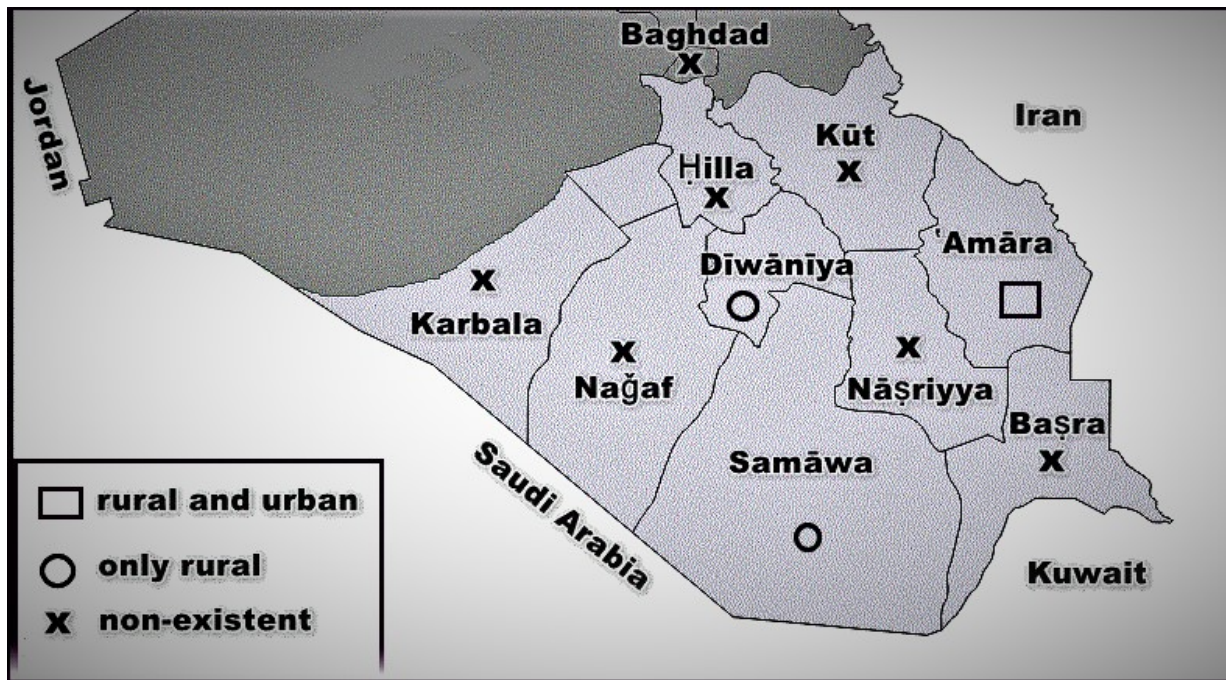
3. The voiced affricate /ž/

The voiced affricate /ž/ occurs today along with the phoneme /ǧ/ in all *šrūgi* dialects and its frequency of occurrence varies significantly from dialect to dialect. It is, for example, most common in both urban and rural *šrūgi* dialects in ʿAmāra and less frequent in the speech of the other urban *šrūgi* dwellers (Nāšriyya, Bašra, Karbala, Samāwa, Dīwāniyya, Nağaf, and Ḥilla), in comparison with their rural counterparts, that usually have /ž/ for /ǧ/ (Map 3.).



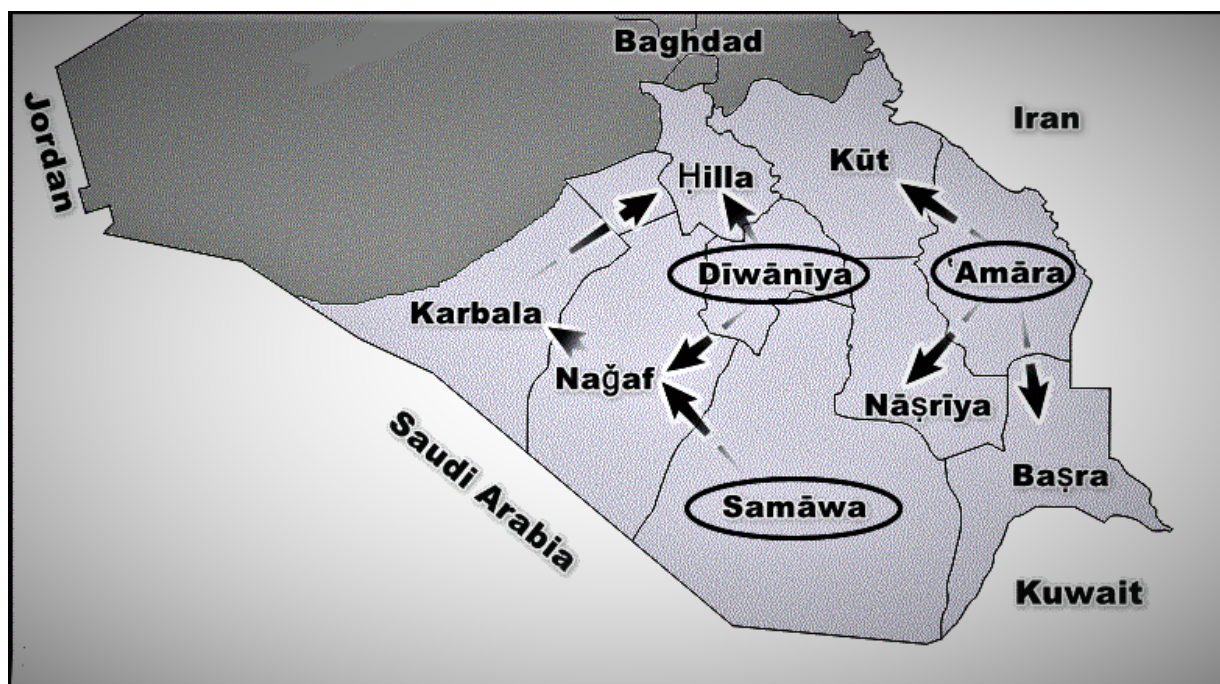
Map 3. The present-day distribution of the voiced affricate /ž/ in the šrūgi dialectal area

The present-day distribution picture of the voiced affricate /ž/ on Map 3., however, was not so in the premigratory situation (Map 4.). It is usually considered a stigmatized rural feature that spread in stages from a rural ž-dialect to a dialect area where it is not heard of before. Accordingly, with all probability, today's intensive presence of the voiced affricate /ž/ can be attributed to two reasons. First, the massive movements of ž-dialect-speaking peasants into areas in which this reflex is previously unknown, and second, the forced displacement of a ž-dialect-speaking tribe, wholly or partially, from its ancestral land to a new place due to tribal disputes.



Map 4. The premigratory distribution of the voiced affricate /ʒ/ in the *šrūgi* dialectal area

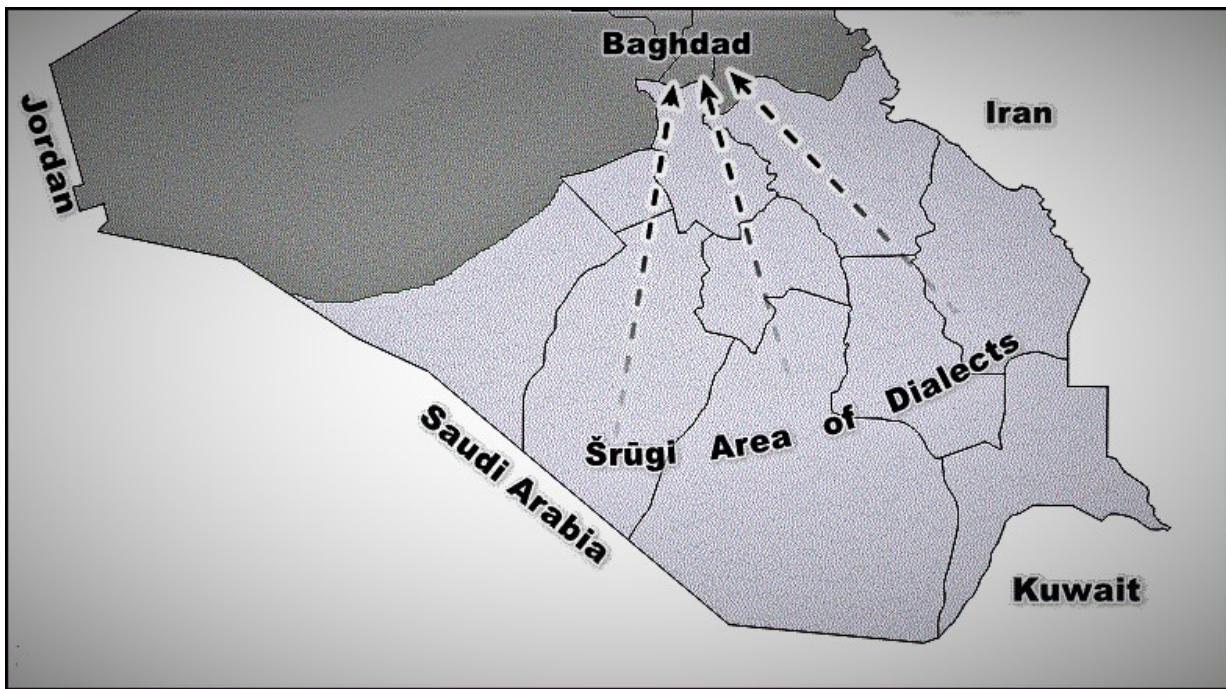
Moreover, one can also assume that the voiced affricate /ʒ/ spread from two different geographic starting points. The first goes from ^ʿAmāra southwards to Nāṣriyya and Baṣra, and northwards to Kūt on the Tigris, the second southwest from Samāwa and Dīwāniyya, the hubs of the *ž*-dialects in the Middle Euphrates area, up to Naḡaf, Karbala, and Ḥilla on the Euphrates (Map 5.). This can be evidenced by the tribal correlation found between the tribes in the source areas and those in the target areas. Therefore, *ž*-speakers in Nāṣriyya and Baṣra are closely related to those in ^ʿAmāra, whereas those in the southwest area are closer in consanguinity to the neighboring population in Samāwa and Dīwāniyya than to ^ʿAmāra.



Map 5. The postmigratory situation of the voiced affricate /ʒ/ in the šrūgi dialectal area

The second point of interest is that the frequency of the voiced affricate /ʒ/ becomes less and less the further southwest one goes in the Middle Euphrates area. Similarly, the further southeast of ʿAmāra, the source of the voiced affricate /ʒ/ in the south, along the west bank of Shatt Al-Arab we go, the less frequent this reflex becomes. This gradual spatial decrease of the voiced affricate would indicate that it is a postmigratory feature rather than a premigratory one.

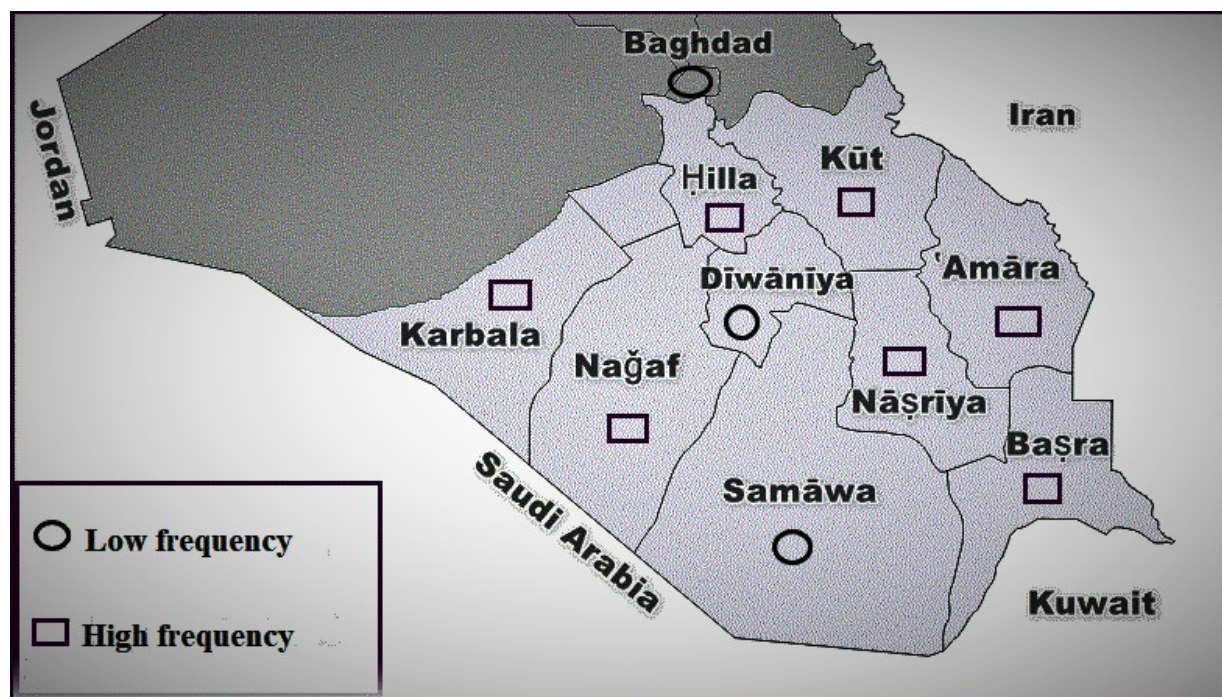
In Baghdad, on the other hand, the voiced affricate /ʒ/ represents a particular case in that it occurs to an inconsiderable extent, as a postmigratory feature, amongst immigrant communities hailing from different šrūgi areas of dialects (Map 6.). Most of them moved out of agriculture, in the second half of the past century, in search of better opportunities to improve their living conditions, and they usually live in heavily populated quarters of the capital.



Map 6. The voiced affricate /ž/ as a postmigratory feature in Baghdad

4. The palatal approximant /y/

The geographic distribution picture of the palatal approximant /y/ appears to be quite different from that shown for the voiced affricate /ž/. The palatal approximant /y/ is in principle a premigratory feature in the completely rural *šrūgi* dialectal area, though its frequency of occurrence in this area is not the same. It is found to be considerably higher in frequency in the rural areas of Bašra, ^ʿAmāra, and Nāšriyya in the south, but it becomes lower the further southwest one goes in the area (Map 7.). In Kūt, however, the palatal approximant /y/ is found to be widespread among Bedouins and villagers alike.



Map 7. The frequency of the palatal approximant /y/ in the šrūgi dialectal area

In the strongly rural *ž*-dialects of Dīwāniyya and Samāwa in the Middle Euphrates area, for example, the palatal approximant /y/ appears only sporadically as a postmigratory feature amongst immigrants from the neighboring *y*-dialects as well as amongst Iraqi returnees, or the so-called *bidūn* ‘stateless’, from some Gulf countries. However, the frequency of use of the palatal approximant becomes again higher in the rural areas further southwest in Karbala, particularly amongst the tribesmen of il-Masūd, a branch of the Šammar tribal confederation.

A similar situation obtains in Baghdad and in the southern and southwestern parts of the *šrūgi* dialectal area, where the presence of the palatal approximant is a result of the mass migration of rural residents to urban areas. In these urban areas, the palatal approximant is typically bound to a low sociolinguistic variety and it underwent therefore radical changes under the influence of the prestigious urban dialects in which the phoneme /ǧ/ is usually preserved as a voiced affricate.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the present paper proceeded from the assumption that there are a critical gap and an incomplete picture of the classification of the *ǧalāt* dialects, in comparison to their *ǧaltu* counterparts that received priority attention in the literature on Iraqi-Arabic dialectology. The main aim of this paper was therefore to cover this gap and to provide new insights in support of the division of the *ǧalāt* dialects into *šrūgi*- and non-*šrūgi* dialectal areas. For this purpose, the geographic distribution of ǧ-

reflexes is presented. It has been shown that *ǧ*-reflexes are nowadays present in all *šrūgi* dialects, but completely absent in the non-*šrūgi* ones. It has been also shown that the voiced affricate /*ǰ*/ is, for the most part, a postmigratory feature in contrast to the palatal approximant /*y*/, which seems to be premigratory.

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De la variation au changement phonologique

Une étude en synchronie dynamique du système consonantique de l'arabe parlé en Jordanie

Bassel Al Zboun et Nisreen Abu Hanak

Varieties of Jordanian spoken Arabic are interesting not only because they violate the standard Arabic phonological system, but also because they exhibit innovative internal mechanisms of articulations, best be described as evolution of languages (or dialects). While research highlights the social aspects of the emergence of varieties of languages in general and Jordanian spoken Arabic in particular, the present study focuses on the internal processes of evolution of those sounds. In this, the study steps from extrinsic to intrinsic factors of language evolution in the given context. For this purpose, the study draws its discussions and arguments from a quantitative and qualitative analyses of data obtained from an audio corpus of spoken Arabic language from 90 speakers in their natural settings. The study thus aims to contribute to the field of varieties of language through surpassing the traditional tendencies (i.e. extrinsic or conscious factors) of this filed into more precise descriptions of the unconscious articulation of language sounds.

Key words: phonology, dynamic synchrony, variation, Arabic language, consonant system

1. Introduction

La langue, instrument de communication par excellence, est en évolution constante à chaque moment de son existence. Martinet (1990 : 13) affirme que la langue fonctionne et change à tout instant. Cette évolution est la conséquence des facteurs internes propres au système et d'autres facteurs externes dépendant d'attitudes sociales à l'égard de cette langue.

Cette recherche est une description de l'évolution de système consonantique de l'arabe parlé en Jordanie comparé parfois à l'arabe standard sous un aspect synchronique et dynamique. L'arabe standard est la variante moderne de l'arabe classique (la langue normative) enseignée dans les écoles et les instituts universitaires. Cette forme est employée dans l'éducation journalistique et scientifique et dans certains media et administration.

Cette étude met en exergue les variétés de l'arabe parlées par les usagers, les processus d'évolution, les changements en cours et les facteurs internes et externes qui semblent les gouverner. En effet, il s'agit de présenter les différentes évolutions consonantiques en cours dans la langue au moment même de leur déroulement. Dès lors, il est impossible de fournir une description fondée sans étudier préalablement le système consonantique de la langue. Pour cette raison notre analyse débute par une description du système phonologique de la langue avant d'étudier ses variations.

L'analyse est faite à partir d'un corpus audio constitué des données recueillies directement auprès des locuteurs de la langue afin de décrire la réalité langagière comme le souligne Martinet (1989 : 52)

endiguée par le souci constant de ne pas déformer la réalité langagière : puisque, en réalité, la langue change à chaque instant, toute description qui ne tient pas compte de l'évolution est nécessairement déformante.

Ce corpus, qui est enregistré auprès des locuteurs de différentes régions, de sexe et d'âge différents, sera la base de notre travail. Une fois le système consonantique établi, l'analyse des variations sera faite en deux temps, l'un en analysant les facteurs internes liés au système de la langue, l'autre portant sur les facteurs externes d'ordre social. Une étude analytique est nécessaire afin de démontrer l'impact des facteurs externes tels que le sexe, l'âge, la localisation géographique et le style au niveau des variations et des changements en cours.

2. Corpus

L'arabe jordanien fait partie de l'arabe levantin septentrional parlé en Syrie, au Liban et en Palestine. L'arabe parlé en Jordanie n'est pas une entité homogène et présente des variations tant sur le plan phonologique que syntaxique. Ces variations correspondent à ce que l'on pourrait appeler des niveaux de langues liés bien évidemment aux différences socio-culturelles de la population.

L'arabe jordanien possède un certain nombre de dialectes ou de variétés. Ces dialectes sont divisés en trois variétés : urbain, rural et bédouin dont la distribution est répartie selon les régions géographiques ou provinces du pays.

- Le dialecte urbain de type levantin méridional aux grandes villes du centre est un mélange de dialectes parlés par les personnes qui ont émigré du Hauran au nord du pays, de Moab dans le sud

et beaucoup plus tard de la Palestine. En effet, ce dialecte a été beaucoup influencé par les réfugiés palestiniens qui ont été déplacés de leur pays en 1948 et 1967.

- Le dialecte rural de type levantin méridional parlé dans les villages et les petites villes et qui est subdivisé en :
 1. Hourani dans l'extrême nord (le dialecte de la ville d'Ajloun et d'Irbid) et Balgawi dans les régions du nord-ouest et du centre (le dialecte de la ville de Salt) (Al Wer 2007).
 2. Moab parlé dans les régions qui se situent au sud d'Amman telles que Karak, Tafilah et Shoubak.
- Le dialecte bédouin appartenant à la famille de l'arabe badawi et parlé dans les zones désertiques, en particulier à l'Est et au sud du pays comme Mafraq, Ma'an et d'autres régions bédouines.

Les liens étroits avec l'arabe standard, langue de l'enseignement, de la culture écrite et bien évidemment de la religion viennent en quelque sorte relativiser et donner une référence au parler. Les variations observées sont entre autres le résultat évident de plusieurs vagues migratoires causées par plusieurs guerres douloureuses qui ont frappé et qui frappent toujours cette partie du monde.

Notre corpus est constitué des enregistrements de 90 personnes de trois générations différentes, chacune est divisée en deux ensembles, hommes et femmes composés de 5 personnes interviewées individuellement. Les 90 personnes proviennent de trois régions, 30 au nord, 30 au centre et 30 au sud appartenant aux trois tranches d'âge distinctes 17 à 30 ans, 30 à 55 et 55 à 80 ans.

Au nord, la tranche d'âge entre 17 et 30 ans est constituée de 3 étudiants à l'université en troisième et quatrième année, un commerçant qui a un bac plus 4 et un employé d'une banque, alors que les personnes de sexe féminin sont deux étudiantes en deuxième année à l'université, une enseignante dans une école publique, une qui travaille dans un centre commercial et la dernière travaille dans une cabine médicale.

Quant aux locuteurs âgés entre 30 et 55 ans, ils ont tous fait des études supérieures dont 3 professeurs d'université, un militaire et un fonctionnaire. Quant aux locutrices, une est professeur d'université, deux enseignantes et deux fonctionnaires.

Les locuteurs âgés de plus 55 ans sont trois retraités de l'armée et n'ont pas fait d'études supérieures, mais exercent actuellement comme activité professionnelle l'agriculture et l'élevage dans leur village. Les deux autres sont agriculteurs et n'étaient scolarisés que durant trois ans à l'école. Les locutrices sont deux femmes au foyer, une professeur d'université en exercice, une retraitée de l'éducation nationale et une retraitée de la fonction publique.

Quant à la région du centre, les locuteurs qui ont un âge situé entre 17 et 30 ans sont deux agents de voyage, un fonctionnaire avec un niveau d'étude bac plus 4 et deux étudiants d'université. Les locutrices sont une gérante d'un magasin de chausseurs pour femmes, une secrétaire dans une entreprise de télécommunication, deux étudiantes en première et deuxième année et une enseignante à l'université.

La deuxième tranche d'âge (30 à 55 ans) comprend pour les hommes, un commerçant, un militaire, un enseignant, un employé d'une banque et un guide touristique et ont tous suivi des études à l'université. Pour les femmes, nous trouvons deux enseignantes, une secrétaire dans une école privée, une dentiste et une guide touristique.

Les locuteurs âgés de plus 55 ans sont deux commerçants, un militaire à la retraite, un enseignant et un professeur d'université. Les personnes de sexe féminin se composent de deux femmes au foyer, une enseignante, une professeur d'université et une fonctionnaire.

Au sud nous trouvons, pour les moins de 30 ans, deux étudiants, un fonctionnaire, un stagiaire travaillant à l'aéroport et un réceptionniste. Les locutrices sont une réceptionniste, deux étudiantes à l'université et deux employés à la poste. Pour ceux qui sont entre 30 et 55 ans, nous avons deux enseignants, un professeur d'université, un commerçant et un fonctionnaire. Les locutrices sont deux enseignantes, deux fonctionnaires et une gérante d'un restaurant.

Les locuteurs de plus 55 ans sont deux professeurs d'université, deux retraités de la fonction publique et un enseignant. Les locutrices sont deux femmes au foyer, deux enseignantes et une retraitée de la fonction publique.

Ces personnes ont été choisies soit à partir d'un réseau de contact personnel, soit de manière aléatoire ayant accepté de se faire interviewer.

Chaque informateur a été interviewé individuellement pendant environ 10 à 15 minutes. Par ailleurs, pour obtenir un corpus représentatif, la méthode employée était des enregistrements semi-dirigés réalisés par le biais des interviews dans lesquelles des questions ouvertes, traitant le style de vie dans les différentes régions du pays, ont été posées. Le but principal de ce genre d'interview est de laisser plus d'espace aux informateurs pour l'élaboration narrative ou conversationnelle.

L'enquête a été effectuée sur plusieurs mois étalés sur la période du printemps et de l'été 2017. Elle a été réalisée en trois phases, la première est constituée des enregistrements préliminaires. Dans la seconde phase, tout le programme d'enregistrements a été accompli et la dernière a servi de vérification des données, de sorte à les compléter et à les affiner.

L'interview de chaque locuteur a été, par la suite, transcrite et les occurrences de chaque variable ont été localisées dans le texte et utilisées pour les comparaisons intergroupales.

3. État de l'art

Nombreux sont les chercheurs qui ont fait des études sur la variation phonétique de l'arabe que ce soit l'arabe jordanien ou les autres variantes de l'arabe. La plupart de ces recherches se focalisent sur des explications sociolinguistiques dont l'objet est l'étude de la langue dans son contexte socioculturel. Elles ne se sont pas concentrées sur le système interne de la langue en la considérant comme un système de signes au sens saussurien « la langue envisagée en elle-même et pour elle-même » (Saussure 1985,45) ou comme la décrit Chomsky un système de règles. Cependant, quelques-uns de ces chercheurs ont essayé d'étudier l'entourage phonétique de telle ou telle variante.

Selon ces études, la variation de la langue dans les communautés arabes est conditionnée par des facteurs sociaux, en l'occurrence les effets de l'urbanisme sur le changement en matière de système phonologique aboutissant à son évolution. Ce changement a un impact significatif sur la phonologie de l'arabe jordanien où les locuteurs des variantes rurales et bédouines tentent souvent d'imiter la variante urbaine appelée variante de prestige local d'après Abdel-Jawad dans son étude intitulée « The Emergence of an Urban Dialect in the Jordanian Urban Centers » (1986). D'autres chercheurs tels que Holes dans « Modern Arabic : Structure, Functions and Varieties » (2004) et Sawaie dans « Speaker's Attitudes toward Linguistic Variation : A Case cStudy of Some Arabic Dialects » (1987) affirment que certaines variantes linguistiques en Jordanie sont plus fréquentes chez les citoyens, en particulier chez les femmes.

D'autres ont montré que les femmes, en général, ont une préférence pour une variante prestigieuse ou supra locale plus souvent que leurs homologues masculins d'après William Cotter dans « (q) as a sociolinguistic variable in the Arabic of Gaza City » (2016), Abdel-Jawad dans « Cross-dialectal variation in Arabic » (1987) et Al-Wer dans « Arabic between Reality and Ideology » (1997).

Sakarna dans « The linguistic status of the modern Jordanian dialects » (2005) étudie l'hypothèse de Abdel-Jawad (1986) selon laquelle la variante urbaine en Jordanie est plus « prestigieuse » que celle rurale et bédouine et également l'hypothèse de Al-Sughayer (1990) qui, pour sa part, considère la variante rurale comme plus prestigieuse. Ainsi Sakarna conclut à l'impossibilité d'établir un classement selon lequel une variante en Jordanie jouit d'un statut plus prestigieux qu'une autre.

Omaria et Van Herkb dans « Sociophonetic Study of Interdental Variation in Spoken Jordanian Arabic » (2016) ont examiné la force linguistique et sociale potentielle sur la variation interdentale en arabe jordanien en utilisant le logiciel d'analyse GoldVarb. Ils affirment que le sexe du locuteur est une contrainte primordiale pour le choix des variantes. En prenant en compte l'urbanisation, ils constatent que les locuteurs urbains se distinguent des autres locuteurs en utilisant des formes plus prestigieuses,

et concluent que les contraintes linguistiques et sociales peuvent se renforcer mutuellement car l'emploi de telle ou telle variante affecte l'identification sociale du locuteur.

4. Cadre théorique et méthodologie

Notre recherche s'appuie théoriquement et méthodologiquement sur la linguistique fonctionnelle développée à partir des années trente dans le cadre de l'une des branches qui fait suite au structuralisme. La base de cette pensée est issue des réflexions de Saussure et de Troubetzkoy, des travaux de l'école de Prague et des progrès théoriques accomplis au cours des dernières années en linguistique fonctionnelle et elle se fonde en particulier sur les recherches de Martinet et de ses disciples pour ce qui est interne au système phonologique.

Afin d'analyser les facteurs internes, nous avons précisé minutieusement en première étape toutes les caractéristiques articulatoires et acoustiques des sons du corpus. Une fois cette étape effectuée, nous avons dégagé les phonèmes parmi les sons mis en évidence à partir de leur fonction distinctive en s'appuyant sur des paires minimales par la procédure de la commutation qui nous a permis d'opposer des morphèmes. Par exemple : /ʃa:r/ « il est devenu » ~ /sa:r/ « il a marché ». Nous étions attentifs au fait qu'il y a des unités distinctives qui présentent des variations de réalisation et qui n'entraînent pas de différence de sens qu'elles soient combinatoires ou libres.

En deuxième étape, nous avons identifié les traits pertinents qui différencient les unités distinctives afin de présenter les phonèmes consonantiques dans le Tableau 2. Les variantes relevées étaient distribuées pour chaque locuteur selon la zone géographique, la tranche d'âge et le sexe dans le but de réaliser une comparaison intergroupe selon la fréquence de chaque variante ce qui nous a permis ultérieurement de chercher les liens entre ces variantes et les facteurs externes.

Pour l'analyse des facteurs externes que cette recherche aborde, nous nous appuyons sur la linguistique variationniste contemporaine de Labov qui affirme l'impossibilité :

[...] de comprendre un changement hors de la vie sociale de la communauté où il se produit. Ou encore, pour le dire autrement, que des pressions sociales s'exercent constamment sur la langue, non pas de quelque point du lointain passé, mais sous la forme d'une force sociale immanente et présentement active (Labov 1976 : 47).

Ainsi, les facteurs sociaux tels que l'âge, le sexe et la classe sociale deviennent des critères permettant d'expliquer ce qu'il appelle la variation stylistique.

Ce travail s'est basé également sur quelques critères développés par la troisième vague de la sociolinguistique variationniste. Cette vague se concentre sur la signification sociale des variables en considérant les styles comme directement associés aux catégories d'identité :

The third wave focuses in even more on the social meaning of variables. It views styles, rather than variables, as directly associated with identity categories, and explores the contribution of variables to styles. The target of investigation is not only the linguistic variable, but any linguistic material that serves a social/stylistic purpose [...]. A prevailing goal is how speakers construct their personalities using these materials (Tagliamonte 2012: 37-38)

Nous avons recours à l'analyse statistique par le test de *Khi-deux* qui permet de déterminer s'il y a une association entre la réalisation des phonèmes et les facteurs externes à savoir la région, l'âge et le sexe et *Fisher's exact test* qui est plus fiable lorsque les échantillons sont au moins de 5. En examinant notre corpus par ces tests, nous cherchons la probabilité que la réalisation de telle ou telle variante puisse être influencée par les trois facteurs externes en posant la question suivante : Est-ce qu'il y a une relation entre la variation et la région, l'âge et le sexe des personnes interrogées ? Nous avons formé les deux hypothèses suivantes :

1. Hypothèse nulle (H0) : il n'y a pas de lien entre les trois facteurs et la variation.
2. Hypothèse alternative : il y a un lien entre ces facteurs et la variation.

Le seuil de probabilité (la valeur de p) de *Khi-deux* et *Fisher's exact test* choisi pour mesurer le degré de certitude est de 0.05. Autrement dit, l'hypothèse nulle est rejetée si la valeur de p est inférieure à 0,05.

5. La Jordanie et les vagues d'immigration

Située sur la rive orientale du Jourdain, la Jordanie est fondée en 1921 sur un territoire de 89 000 Km² au cœur du monde arabe. Ce petit pays est né du découpage de l'Empire Ottoman à la fin de la première guerre mondiale et elle est entourée par la Syrie au nord-est, l'Irak à l'est et au sud-est, l'Arabie Saoudite au sud et la Palestine à l'ouest et possède des frontières maritimes avec l'Égypte dans le sud.

La Jordanie est actuellement habitée par 10,64 millions d'habitants selon les statistiques de 2019. En effet, ce chiffre s'explique par le fait que la Jordanie est une terre d'accueil ayant connu de nombreuses vagues d'immigrations qui ont constamment influencé sa structure démographique, économique et politique.

- La 1^{ère} vague d'immigration (les Palestiniens) : la Jordanie a été confrontée à un exode massif en provenance de la Palestine en raison de la guerre israélo-arabe en 1948 où 625.000 réfugiés y ont trouvé refuge dont 70 000 sur la rive orientale du Jourdain (Transjordanie) et 280.000 sur sa rive occidentale (Cisjordanie ; Al Hussein 2004: 31-50). De même l'occupation de la Cisjordanie par Israël en 1967 a entraîné l'installation de 240.000 habitants de Cisjordanie en Transjordanie (la Jordanie actuelle ; Al Hussein et Signoles 2011: 76). En 1991, la Jordanie accueille 200.000 palestiniens expulsés du Koweït et d'autres pays du Golfe durant la première guerre du Golfe en raison du soutien de l'Organisation de Libération de la Palestine (OLP) à l'Irak pendant l'occupation du Koweït (Froment 2018, en ligne).
- La 2^{ème} vague d'immigration (les Irakiens) : l'année 2003 a été marquée par l'intervention militaire des États-Unis en Irak et la Jordanie en a subi les conséquences avec 500000 irakiens qui s'y installent (Chatelard 2010, en ligne).
- La 3^{ème} vague d'immigration (les Syriens) : la guerre en Syrie qui a commencé en 2011 et qui perdure depuis 7 ans a engendré 4,8 millions de réfugiés dont 1,4 millions sont en Jordanie (Jaber 2016, 95-108).

Ces phénomènes d'immigrations sont considérés comme une des raisons principales de la variation des parlers en Jordanie, en particulier dans la capitale qui compte le nombre des réfugiés le plus élevé en Jordanie.

Région du Nord	Irbid	1.867.000
	Mafraq	580.000
	Jarash	250.000
	Ajloun	185.700
Région du Centre	Amman / la capitale	4.226.700
	Al Balqa	518.600
	Al Zarqua	1.439.500
	Madaba	199.500
Région du Sud	Karak	333.900
	Tafila	101.600
	Maan	152.000
	Aqaba	198.500

Tableau 1. Répartition géographique de la population en Jordanie (2019, en ligne)

6. Le système consonantique parlé en Jordanie

Le système consonantique de l'arabe étudié comporte vingt-six phonèmes qui sont identifiés selon neuf ordres.

Type de consonne Selon le mouvement		Passage de l'air	Point d' articulation	Bilabiale	Labio-dentale	Inter-dentale	Apico-dentale	Pré-alvéolaire	Post-alvéolaire	Vélaire	Uvulaire	Pharyngale	Glottale
			Vibration des cordes Vocales										
Occlusif	NE ¹	Oral	Sourde				/t/			/k/			/ʔ/
			Sonore	/b/			/d/			/g/			
	Nasal		/m/			/n/							
	E ²	Oral	Sourde				/t̤/						
Sonore													
Fricatif	NE	Orale	Sourde		/f/	/θ/		/s/	/ʃ/		/x/	/ħ/	/h/
			Sonore			/ð/		/z/	/ʒ/		/ɣ/	/ʕ/	
	E	Orale	Sourde			/ð̤/		/s̤/					

Tableau 2. Le système consonantique de l'arabe jordanien

- Les bilabiales : elles regroupent deux phonèmes /b/ et /m/ dont un nasal. Cet ordre ne comprend pas le [p] qui n'est présent que dans des mots empruntés à des langues étrangères comme l'anglais et le français et qui n'entrent pas en corrélation avec d'autre unité en tant que paire minimale.
- Les labio-dentales : elles ne comprennent qu'un seul phonème /f/. L'ordre labio-dental ne comprend pas le son [v], celui-ci est présent seulement en tant qu'emprunt à d'autres langues comme l'anglais et le français.

¹ NE : Non emphatique

² E : Emphatique

- Les inter-dentales : cet ordre se compose de trois phonèmes fricatifs l'un sourd /θ/ l'autre sonore /ð/ ainsi que son correspondant emphatique /ð̤/.
- Les apico-dentales : elles sont quatre phonèmes dont deux occlusifs, l'un sourd /t/ l'autre sonore /d/, un emphatique sourd /t̤/, et un seul nasal /n/. Le phonème /d̤/ de l'arabe standard est complètement absent du parler jordanien et confondu avec les phonèmes /d/ ou /ð/.
- Les pré-alvéolaires : cet ordre comprend le /s/, le /z/ et l'emphatique /s̤/.
- Les post-alvéolaires : elles comportent deux phonèmes fricatifs, sourd /ʃ/ et sonore /ʒ/.
- Les vibrantes et les latérales : la langue compte parmi ses phonèmes le latéral /l/ et le vibrant /r/ qui est plus roulé en arabe qu'en anglais.
- Les vélaires : cet ordre comprend le phonème /k/ qui s'oppose par la sonorité, dans certaines variantes d'arabe, au phonème /g/ qui a pris la place du phonème /q/ de l'arabe standard.
- Les uvulaires : l'arabe regroupe trois phonèmes, deux fricatifs l'un sourd /x/, l'autre sonore /ɣ/. Quant à l'occlusif /q/ de l'arabe standard, nous ne l'avons pas intégré au système car il n'apparaît que dans la norme standard.
- Les pharyngales : le système contient deux phonèmes de cet ordre ; ce sont des fricatifs, un sourd /ħ/, un autre sonore /ʕ/.
- Les glottales : l'arabe compte deux phonèmes, occlusif /ʔ/ et glottal fricatif /h/.

7. Analyse de la dynamique des phonèmes consonantiques

7.1. Le phonème /θ/

La consonne [θ] se réalise comme une fricative, la langue passe entre les dents ce qui entraîne un rétrécissement du passage de l'air provoquant un bruit de friction lorsque l'air passe par la mince ouverture formée par la langue et les dents supérieures. Elle est aussi, inter-dentale, prononcée avec la pointe de la langue et sourde, et elle est assimilée à la consonne [t] réalisée comme une occlusive qui suppose une fermeture complète du chenal expiratoire ; c'est une apico-dentale et sourde.

7.1.1. Facteurs internes

L'assimilation du phonème /θ/ au phonème /t/ s'explique par des facteurs propres au système interne de la langue. En fait, chacun des deux phonèmes se caractérise par une zone articulaire qui est son champ de dispersion sur lequel s'étend ses réalisations autour d'un centre de gravité. Ils sont séparés par une marge de sécurité qui est une sorte de « no man's land » (Martinet 1955). Vu que la perception

et la production du phonème /θ/ sont moins différenciées, l'opposition /θ/ ~ /t/ qui est affaiblie conduit à la neutralisation de cette opposition dans la variante jordanienne et d'autres variantes.

[θala:ta] / [tala:ta] « trois »

[maθalan] / [matalan] « par exemple »

[baryu:θ] / [baryu:t] « une puce »

En conséquent, l'articulation du phonème /θ/ commence à s'écarter de son centre de gravité en franchissant la zone de sécurité et en empiétant sur le faisceau des traits pertinents du phonème /t/. Il se met à changer le lieu d'articulation ensuite le mode d'articulation.

Il résulte de cette faiblesse de rendement fonctionnel, défini comme « le degré d'utilisation d'une opposition phonologique » (Cercle linguistique de Prague 1931 : 303-323) un fusionnement de /θ/ au phonème /t/ en adaptant son faisceau des traits pertinents. Le système tend donc vers une certaine économie qui se traduit par la réduction du phonème fricatif interdental /θ/ pour des raisons purement structurelles en cherchant une certaine optimisation du système, ce qui est le propre de toute langue vivante.

7.1.2. Facteurs externes

- Facteur régional

Variable	Région			Total (effectif)	Total (Pourcentage)	Missing pourcentage	Khi-deux			Fisher's	
	Nord	Centre	Sud				Khi-deux	Ddi	Asymp. Sig.	Fisher's	(bilatérale) Sig. exacte.
/θ/-/t/-/s/											
/θ/	15	1	16	43	35.5%						
/t/	11	22	10	0	47.7%						
/s/	0	2	0	2	2.2%						
/θ/-/t/	4	4	4	12	13.3%						
/θ/-/s/	0	1	0	1	1.1%						
Total	30	30	30	90	100%	5.6%	22.425	6	0.001		0.000

Tableau 3. Phonème /θ/: facteur régional

Le phonème /θ/ est assimilé au phonème /t/ et parfois au phonème /s/ fricatif, alvéolaire et sourd.

L'analyse des données montre une localisation plus pertinente du phonème /θ/ au nord et au sud avec un pourcentage de 50 % pour le nord et 53,3% pour le sud et une fréquence moindre au centre (3,3%).

L'assimilation de /θ/ à /t/ représente 47,7% dans les trois régions mais apparaît d'une manière évidente chez des locuteurs habitant au centre avec un pourcentage de 73,3%.

Par ailleurs, 13,3% des enquêtés des trois régions alternent, dans le même contexte, les deux phonèmes /θ/ et /t/. Nous constatons que la réalisation [θ] est plus fréquente dans les zones rurales avec une certaine alternance avec la réalisation [t], alors que la réalisation [t] est manifeste au centre qui est une zone urbaine. Nous observons un avancement de la réalisation [t] de la région du centre vers le nord et le sud puisqu'un nombre important des locuteurs particulièrement du nord sont en contact avec des locuteurs du centre étant donné leur travail et leurs études.

De surcroît, l'assimilation du phonème /θ/ au /s/, qui est visible seulement au centre, ne représente qu'une faible proportion (2,2%).

Le test Khi-deux d'indépendance et et Fisher's exact test pour la variable [θ], [t] et [s] et la région est de 22,425 et 27.351 et représentent une valeur statistique significative liée à un seuil de risque de 5%. Cela signifie le rejet de l'hypothèse nulle (H0) qui suggère qu'il n'y a pas de lien entre la réalisation du phonème et la région et donc l'acceptation de l'hypothèse alternative supposant un lien entre la réalisation et la région car la valeur de p de Khi-deux est de 0,001 et celle de Fisher's exact test est de 0.000, donc la valeur de p est < 0.05.

• Facteur d'âge

Variable	Age			Total (effectif)	Total (Pourcentage)	Missing pourcentage	Khi-deux			Fisher's	
	+55	30-55	17-30				Khi-deux	Ddi	Sig. Asymp. (bilatérale)	Fisher's s	Sig. exacte. (bilatérale)
/θ/	17	13	3	33	36.6%						
/t/	7	11	24	42	46.6%						
/s/	0	2	0	2	2.2%						
/θ/-/t/	5	4	3	12	13.3%						
/θ/-/s/	1	0	0	1	1.1%						
	30	30	30	90	99.8%	0.2%	28,515	6	0.001	27.351	0.000

Tableau 4. Phonème /θ/ : facteur d'âge

Quant au facteur d'âge, nous notons d'une part que la réalisation [θ] est dominante chez les locuteurs âgés de plus de 55 ans (56,6%), en revanche ceux âgés de 30 ans à 55 l'emploient moins (43,3%) et elle est peu présente chez les moins de 30 ans (10%) où le total de cette réalisation est de 36,6%.

D'autre part l'assimilation du phonème /θ/ au phonème /t/ chez 46,6% des locuteurs est plus forte chez les moins de 30 ans (80%) que chez ceux de 30 à 55 ans (36,6%) et elle est de (23,3%) chez les plus de 55 ans. En outre, 13,3% des locuteurs alternent les deux phonèmes dans les mêmes circonstances. La présence de cette réalisation chez le plus jeune pourrait s'expliquer par le désir de s'identifier à une norme vue comme plus prestigieuse. Nous avons observé que ces jeunes voient dans la réalisation [θ] une réalisation archaïque appartenant à l'ère du passé et aux gens les plus vieux. Cependant les locuteurs de 30 à 55 ans sont partagés entre les deux réalisations sachant que ces deux tranches d'âge sont les plus éduquées mais l'influence de la norme sociale est plus forte que la norme standard.

Quant à l'assimilation de phonème /θ/ au /s/, elle est rare et ne représente que 2,2%.

Ce résultat fait apparaître que la valeur calculée de Khi-deux pour la variable /θ/-/t/-/s/ et l'âge est de 28,515 et pour Fisher's exact test est de 27.351. En ce cas la valeur de p est de 0.001 et de 0.000 pour Fisher's exact test. Donc nous constatons que les variables âge et l'assimilation du phonème /θ/ à /t/ sont dépendantes ce qui nous conduit à affirmer l'hypothèse alternative.

- Facteur de sexe

Variable	Sexe		Total	Total (Pourcentage)	Missing pourcentage	Khi-deux			Fisher's	
	Homme	Femme				Khi-deux	Ddi	(bilatérale) Sig. Asymp.	Fisher's	(bilatérale) Sig. exacte.
/θ/	19	13	32	35.5%						
/t/	16	26	42	46.6%						
/s/	0	2	2	2.2%						
/θ/-/t/	9	13	13	13.3%						
/θ/-/s/	1	1	1	1.1%						
Total	45	45	90	99.8%	0.2%	6.080	3	0.108	6.843	0.051

Tableau 5. Phonème /θ/ : facteur de sexe

Ce facteur nous indique que les hommes ont tendance à employer le phonème /θ/ (42.2%) contre (28.8%) pour le sexe féminin. L'assimilation du phonème/θ/ au /t/ est manifeste chez 57,7% des femmes face à 35.5% pour les hommes et 13,3% alternent l'un ou l'autre.

Les femmes ont recours principalement à cette variante citadine considérée comme étant plus prestigieuse dans la mesure où elle permettra de mettre en valeur leur féminité et leur statue sociale.

La valeur statistique de Khi-deux est de 6.080 et celle de Fisher's exact test est de 6.843, donc la valeur de p de Khi-deux est 0.108 et de Fisher's exact test est 0.051 ainsi l'hypothèse H0 qui suppose qu'il n'y a pas de lien entre le sexe et l'assimilation est confirmée, néanmoins, la valeur de Fisher's exact test est à la limite du seuil de risque de 5% qui suggère que ce facteur de sexe n'est pas sans impact et qu'il pourrait disparaître avec le temps puisque la tendance chez les hommes progresse vers la réalisation [t].

7.2. Le phonème /k/

7.2.1. Facteurs internes

La variante [tʃ] affriquée, palatale et sourde est en voie de disparition au profit du phonème /k/ occlusif, vélaire, articulé au niveau du palais mou et sourd, de l'arabe standard. Cette disparition est purement structurale relevant de l'équilibre de système en économisant le mode affriqué suivant le principe de l'économie selon Martinet (1955, 94).

Il se pourrait que la variante [tʃ], à un moment donné de l'histoire de la langue, fût pertinente, comme en témoignent certaines variantes de l'arabe parlé. Elle était maintenue en raison de sa fonctionnalité en opposition au phonème /k/en tant que morphème de la possession qui se manifeste, d'une part, dans certaine variante de l'arabe sous la forme du pronom personnel de la deuxième personne féminin affixé au nom afin d'indiquer la possession :

/ktabak/ « ton livre (deuxième personne masculin) »

/ktabitʃ/ « ton livre (deuxième personne féminin) ».

Le pronom personnel [tʃ] détermine le verbe par l'intermédiaire de la préposition /ʔla/ « à » qui se réalise comme [l] lorsqu'il relie un verbe à un pronom personnel indiquant la direction du procès :

/hake:tlak/ « je t'ai dit (M) »

/hale:tlatʃ/ « je t'ai dit (F) »

Mais l'apprentissage obligatoire de l'arabe standard et la norme urbaine et prestigieuse de la réalisation [k] ont rendu faible le rendement fonctionnel et ont conduit à sa disparition au fil du temps, où la voyelle l'a remplacée :

/kta:bak/ « ton livre (M) »

/kta:bik/ « ton livre (F) ».

7.2.2. Facteurs externes

- Facteur régional

Variable	Région			Total (effectif)	Total (Pourcentage)	Missing pourcentage	Khi-deux			Fisher's	
	Nord	Centre	Sud				Khi-deux	Ddi	Sig. Asymp. (bilatérale)	Fisher's	(bilatérale)
/k/	21	30	27	78	86.7%						
[t̪]	0	0	0	0	0.0%						
/k/ - [t̪]	9	0	3	12	13.3%						
Total	30	30	30	90	100%	0.0%	12.115	2	0.002	11.854	0.002

Tableau 6. Phonème /k/ : facteur régional

Le phonème /k/ occlusif, vélaire et sourd se réalise comme [t̪] occlusif, fricatif, palato-alvéolaire et sourd. Cette variante est souvent réalisée, notamment au nord du pays et nous la trouvons dans toutes les positions et surtout en finale.

[t̪θi:r] « beaucoup »

[sa:t̪in] « il habite »

[ʔguli:t̪] « je te (interlocuteur féminin) dis »

La variante [t̪] est apparue en alternance avec le phonème /k/ dans le nord (10%) et dans le sud (3,3%) et n'apparaît jamais dans le centre.

L'analyse du facteur régional indique que la valeur calculée du test Khi-deux est de 12,115 et de Fisher's exact test est de 11.854, la valeur de p est de 0,002 pour les deux tests (inférieure à 5%). Dans ces circonstances, notre hypothèse alternative est acceptée, en d'autres termes, un lien existe entre la région et la variante [t̪].

Cette variante persiste chez certains locuteurs qui font l'alternance avec [k] pour afficher leur appartenance à leur région et leur origine en se distinguant des autres.

- Facteur d'âge

Variable	Age			Total (effectif)	Total (Pourcentage)	Missing pourcentage	Khi-deux			Fisher's	
	+55	30-55	17-30				Khi-deux	Ddi	Sig. Asymp. (bilatérale)	Fisher's	Sig. exacte. (bilatérale)
/k/	20	28	30	78	86.7%						
[t̪]	0	0	0	0	0.0%						
/k/-[t̪]	10	2	0	12	13.3%						
Total	30	30	30	90	100%	0.0%	16.154	2	0.000	14.364	0.000

Tableau 7. Phonème /k/ : facteur d'âge

La variante [t̪] est très fréquente et même majoritaire chez les personnes âgées de plus de 55 ans des deux sexes. En revanche, sa fréquence est très rare chez les personnes âgées entre 30 et 55 ans et quasi inexistante chez les jeunes de moins de 30 ans. Cette variante n'est jamais apparue dans le centre et se manifeste rarement au sud, une seule fois chez un locuteur de plus de 55 ans de sexe masculin et deux fois chez deux enquêtés âgés entre 30 et 55 ans, un homme et une femme.

Il ressort clairement de cette analyse qu'il y a un lien entre l'âge et la variante [t̪]. Donc l'hypothèse H0 est rejetée puisque la valeur calculée de Khi-deux est de 16.154 et celle de Fisher's exact test est de 14.364 et la valeur de p est de 0.000 pour les deux tests.

La variante n'est pas seulement la manifestation de changement linguistique mais aussi prodigue un changement social car la variante [t̪] signifie dans la société une variante paysanne et bédouine que les locuteurs les plus jeunes tentent d'éviter afin de s'identifier à la classe sociale citadine.

- Facteur de sexe

Variable	Sexe		Total (effectif)	Total (Pourcentage)	Missing pourcentage	Khi-deux			Fisher's	
	Homme	Femme				Khi-deux	Ddi	Sig. Asymp. (bilatérale)	Fisher's s	Sig. exacte. (bilatérale)
/k/ - [tʃ]										
/k/	39	39	78	86.7%						
[tʃ]	0	0	0	0.0%						
/k/ - [tʃ]	6	6	12	13.3%						
Total	45	45	90	100%	0.0%	0.000	1	1.000	1	1.000

Tableau 8. Phonème /k/ : facteur de sexe

Hommes et femmes sont à égalité dans la réalisation de la variante [tʃ]. 86.7% des deux sexes ont employé le phonème /k/ et 13.3% ont alterné le phonème /k/ avec la variante [tʃ].

Le résultat de Khi-deux et Fisher's exact test révèle bien qu'il n'y a pas de lien entre le sexe et la réalisation de la variante étant donné que la valeur calculée de Khi-deux et Fisher's exact test est de 1,000 et la valeur de p est de 1,000 soit largement plus que 5%, ce qui fait que nous acceptons l'hypothèse nulle et rejetons l'hypothèse alternative.

Nous notons que la variante [tʃ] est en voie de disparition de la langue en faveur du phonème /k/. Cette variante était dominante surtout dans le nord du pays à un moment donné de l'histoire de la langue, mais la réalisation [k] est parvenue à s'imposer progressivement. Cette disparition est liée, d'une part, aux facteurs structuraux relevant de l'équilibre de système de la langue qui ne contient pas de mode affriqué. Alors par commodité économique les locuteurs ont cessé de l'employer et l'ont remplacé par le mode occlusif.

Et d'autre part, cette disparition peut être également liée à des facteurs externes d'ordre social et géographique. En réalité, dans la conscience des locuteurs, notamment chez la nouvelle génération, la prononciation [tʃ] renvoie à l'image des paysans et des bédouins, une image plutôt archaïque, surtout dans le nord. Ces jeunes tentent de changer leur prononciation et de remplacer leurs idiomes traditionnels par des mots relevant, de leur point de vue, de la modernité et de la vie urbaine. Nous avons même observé que certains parents empêchent leurs enfants d'employer cette variante pour ne pas être désignés comme paysans ou villageois. Nous pensons aussi que la scolarisation et l'apprentissage de l'arabe standard à l'école a participé fortement à sa disparition.

7.3. phonème /g/

Le phonème /g/ occlusif, vélaire et sonore se réalise soit comme un occlusif, uvulaire et sourd de l'arabe standard /q/, soit comme un occlusif, glottal et sourd /ʔ/. Exemple : /ga:l/ « il a dit » = /qa:l/ ou /ʔa:l/ « il a dit ».

7.3.1. Facteurs internes

En arabe jordanien, le phonème /q/ de l'arabe standard est peu réalisé et remplacé par le phonème /g/. Ce changement trouve son explication en relation avec le système phonologique de l'arabe qui se distingue par ses phonèmes occlusifs et sourds n'ayant pas de correspondants sonores, ce qui fait qu'il y a une réduction de cette série de consonnes dans le but de compléter la case vide. En effet, les phonèmes occlusifs et sourds à part les apico-dentaux n'ont pas leurs correspondants sonores conduisant ainsi à la disparition de l'uvulaire sourd et l'apparition du vélaire sonore par la modification du point d'articulation d'uvulaire à vélaire. Il est évident que les phonèmes qui entrent dans une corrélation bilatérale sont mieux intégrés au système, ainsi les phonèmes tendent à s'intégrer à quelques corrélations, donc virtuellement le partenaire sonore de phonème /k/ n'est pas exploité par la langue qui a permis au phonème /q/ de l'arabe standard de venir remplir ce trou en changeant son articulation dans la direction des traits phonétiques qui constituent la case vide.

Ultérieurement le phonème /ʔ/ occlusif, glottal et sourd qui se réalise avec une ouverture soudaine de la glotte sous la poussée de l'air interne, présente une opposition qui commence à être neutralisée. Cette neutralisation est expliquée, en première approximation, par la faiblesse du rendement fonctionnel du phonème /ʔ/ qui commence à chuter dans le parler et dans toutes les positions comme le montre les exemples ci-dessous. Notons que cette chute est souvent accompagnée d'une modification du phonème vocalique adjacent :

[ʔawla:d] / [ula:de] « des garçons »

[raʔs] / [ra:s] « une tête »

[masa:ʔ] / [masa] « une soirée »

En raison de ce rendement fonctionnel faible, les locuteurs ont tendance à assimiler le phonème /g/ au /ʔ/ ce qui provoquera un jour la neutralisation de l'opposition /g/ ~ /ʔ/ et ainsi la disparition d'un phonème occlusif dans le système de la langue.

7.3.2. Facteurs externes

• Facteur régional

Variable	Région			Total (Pourcentage)	Total pourcentage	Missing pourcentage	Khi-deux			Fisher's	
	Nord	Centre	Sud				Khi-deux	Ddt	Sig. Asymp. (bilatérale)	Fisher's	Sig. exacte. (bilatérale)
/g/-/q/-/?/											
/q/	3	4	4	11	12.22%						
/g/	12	1	14	29	32.12%						
/?/	7	13	4	24	26.66%						
/q/-/g/	3	1	7	11	12.22%						
/g/-/?/	4	2	3	9	10%						
/q/-/?/	1	9	1	11	12.22%						
/g/-/q/-/?/	0	2	1	3	3.3%						
Total	30	30	30	90	100%	0.0%	36.220	10	0.000	37.342	0.000

Tableau 9. Phonème /g/ : facteur régional

La production du phonème /q/ de l'arabe standard est la plus faible dans toutes les régions (12,22%). Les données montrent un pourcentage presque égal dans les trois régions (13,33% au centre et 10% au sud et au nord).

La réalisation du phonème /g/ dans le parler jordanien est bien répandue au sud et au nord ce qui représente un pourcentage de 46,6% et de 40% respectivement. Néanmoins ce phonème est rarement réalisé au centre (3,33%, une seule fois) mais nous y trouvons une omniprésence de la variante [?] qui est de 43,33%, vient ensuite le nord (23,33%) et enfin le sud (13,33%).

A propos de l'alternance liée à la neutralisation de l'opposition, les locuteurs du sud et du nord alternent plus les phonèmes /q/ - /g/ (16,66%) où ils se manifestent 3 fois au nord et 7 fois au sud, alors que l'alternance /g/ - /?/ est de 10% (4 fois au nord, 2 fois au centre et 3 fois au sud).

Cependant, l'alternance /q/ - /?/ est plus nette chez les enquêtés du centre avec un pourcentage de 30%, ce qui n'est pas le cas au sud et au nord où l'emploi a été restreint à une seule fois dans chaque région.

L'alternance de trois réalisations [g]-[q]-[ʔ] est la moins fréquente chez nos interrogés avec un pourcentage de 3,3%.

De cette analyse, nous remarquons que la valeur calculée de test Khi-deux et de Fisher's exact test est de 36.220 et de 37.342 et la valeur de p est de 0.000 qui est considérée comme une valeur significative. Dès lors nous rejetons l'hypothèse H0, autrement dit il n'y a pas de lien entre le facteur régional et l'alternance /g/, /q/ et /ʔ/ et nous acceptons donc l'hypothèse alternative qui suppose qu'il y a un lien entre la région et la variante.

L'omniprésence de phonème /g/ au nord et au sud est un indicateur au sujet de la population habitant ces deux régions, un milieu rural constitué en majorité des paysans et des bédouins. Cependant, la variante /ʔ/ est plus répandue dans la région du centre, en particulier dans la capitale qui est nettement influencée par les mouvements migratoires surtout des Jordaniens originaires de la Palestine. Ce parler est omniprésent chez les habitants de l'ouest de la capitale, la partie moderne qui abrite souvent les plus riches.

• Facteur d'âge

Variable	Age			Total	(Pourcentage)	Missing pourcentage	Khi-deux			Fisher's	
	+55	30-55	17-30				Khi-deux	Ddi	Sig. Asymp. (bilatérale)	Fisher's	Sig. exacte. (bilatérale)
/g/-/q/-/ʔ/											
/q/	0	0	0	0	0%						
/g/	17	13	1	31	34%						
/ʔ/	3	6	17	26	28.9%						
/q/-/g/	2	6	0	8	8.9%						
/g/-/ʔ/	0	3	7	10	11.1%						
/q/-/ʔ/	5	2	4	11	12.2%						
/g/-/q/-/ʔ/	2	0	1	3	3.3%						
Total	30	30	30	90	100%	0.00%	43.566	10	0.000	41.276	0.000

Tableau 10. Phonème /g/ : facteur d'âge

D'après le Tableau 10., nous observons que les locuteurs, tout âge confondu, n'emploient le phonème /q/ de l'arabe standard qu'en alternance avec le /g/ et le phonème /ʔ/. Cependant ceux âgés de plus de 55 ans ont tendance à réaliser le /g/ plus que le /q/ et le /ʔ/ avec 56,6% qui est équivalent au pourcentage des locuteurs de moins de 30 ans optant pour le /ʔ/. Pourtant, les locuteurs âgés de 30 ans à 55 ans réalisent le /g/ dans 43.3% des cas, tandis que l'assimilation au /ʔ/ ne représente que 20%.

Au niveau de l'alternance, les locuteurs de plus de 55 ans alternent principalement les /q/-/ʔ/ et les /q/-/g/ (16.6 % et de 6.6% respectivement) et jamais l'alternance /g/-/ʔ/. Les enquêtés entre 30 ans et 55 ans alternent plutôt le /q/ et le /g/ dans 20% des cas et 10% pour l'alternance /g/-/ʔ/. Les locuteurs de moins de 30 ans alternent le /g/ et le /ʔ/ (23.3%) et le /q/ et le /ʔ/ (13,3%).

Ces résultats indiquent que le facteur d'âge influence la façon dont l'assimilation se réalise. Ainsi ceux ayant plus de 30 ans emploient le /g/ mais ceux âgés de moins de 30 ans utilisent le /ʔ/.

Le Tableau 10. indique que la valeur calculée de Khi-deux et Fisher's exact test est de 43.566 et 41.276 et la valeur de p est de 0.000, ce qui signifie le rejet de l'hypothèse H0 et l'acceptation de l'hypothèse alternative.

- Facteur de sexe

Variable	Sexe		Total	Total (Pourcentage)	Missing pourcentage	Khi-deux			Fisher's	
	Homme	Femme				Khi-deux	Ddi	(bilatérale) Sig. Asymp.	Fisher's	(bilatérale) Sig. exact.
/q/	0	0	0	0%						
/g/	17	14	31	34.4%						
/ʔ/	9	17	26	28.9%						
/q/-/g/	5	3	8	8.9%						
/g/-/ʔ/	6	4	10	11.1%						
/q/-/ʔ/	6	5	11	12.2%						
/g/-/q/-/ʔ/	2	2	4	4.4%						
Total	45	45	90	100%	0.0%	43.065	5	0.540	41.169	0.540

Tableau 11. Phonème /g/ : facteur de sexe

Les résultats montrent que le sexe des locuteurs a un impact faible sur la réalisation de /g/ et son assimilation en /q/ et /ʔ/. Les locuteurs de sexe masculin réalisent le /g/ dans 37% des cas alors que

ceux de sexe féminin emploient le /ʔ/ dans 37% des cas. Ce constat est observé dans toutes les régions, en particulier chez les locutrices de moins de 30 ans.

Certains locuteurs interrogés interprètent ce comportement par l'image que les femmes essaient de renvoyer à la société en faisant illusion d'appartenir à une classe sociale aisée et urbaine et en feignant d'ignorer leur appartenance à une société paysanne ou bédouine vue comme une classe modeste et traditionnelle.

Ce même comportement se trouve chez des locuteurs masculins et ayant moins de 30 ans. Ils remplacent la réalisation [g] par [ʔ] dans des situations de communication particulières comme le fait d'être en contact avec une jeune femme ou de côtoyer des personnes appartenant à une classe sociale urbaine. De ce fait, ces personnes s'identifient à cette classe et cachent leur appartenance à un milieu modeste vu inconsciemment comme inférieur.

Cette observation suppose un rapport entre la prononciation et le regard de l'autre amenant certains locuteurs à changer leur façon de prononcer afin d'être en conformité aux normes dominantes.

Ce changement phonétique révèle que la situation sociale entraîne une certaine rivalité entre la classe sociale privilégiée et les classes les plus modestes, ses membres se sentant désavantagés et tentant de renier leur classe et de valoriser la classe dominante. Par ailleurs, certains locuteurs masculins résistent à cette tendance par fierté de leur classe sociale et pensent qu'une telle prononciation toucherait à leur masculinité en reliant la prononciation [ʔ] au sexe féminin. Ce regard porté sur la réalisation [ʔ] est inexistante chez les locuteurs du centre des deux sexes parce que cette réalisation est apprise dès leur premier âge.

De ce qui précède, nous remarquons que la valeur calculée de Khi-deux et Fisher's exact test est de 43.065 et de 41.169, la valeur de p est de 0.540 signifiant l'acceptation de l'hypothèse H0, soit par de lien entre le sexe et l'assimilation /g/-/q/-/ʔ/ et le rejet de l'hypothèse alternative.

La réalisation du phonème /ʔ/ à la place du phonème /g/ serait le résultat de contacts entre la variante palestinienne et celle jordanienne. Ce contact s'est accentué surtout après le mouvement migratoire des populations palestiniennes après l'occupation de la Cis-Jordanie par Israël en 1967, en particulier de la population venant de la région de Jérusalem et de Naplouse qui se distingue par cette variante.

La majorité de cette population s'est installée au centre du pays surtout à Amman qui dénombre aujourd'hui 4, 226,700 habitants. Il est à souligner que cette population a, au départ, habité dans des camps et s'est mêlée ensuite aux habitants de la région et a formé un noyau important dans le pays en

travaillant dans le domaine du commerce et de l'enseignement et en habitant les quartiers prestigieux de la ville.

Cette même variante se retrouve aussi au Liban où un nombre important de Libanais ont trouvé refuge dans la capitale jordanienne durant la guerre civile où ils ont dirigé leurs affaires commerciales entre 1975 et 1990.

Récemment et depuis le début de la guerre civile en Syrie en 2011, la Jordanie fait partie des principaux pays qui ont enregistré un nombre important de réfugiés syriens, surtout au nord du pays. Cette population qui utilise, en majorité, le phonème /ʔ/ a participé à sa diffusion.

7.4. Le phonème /ð/

7.4.1. Facteurs internes

Le phonème /ð/ est un fricatif, inter-dental et emphatique ; son articulation est accompagnée d'une poussée vers l'arrière de la racine de la langue qui se creuse pour augmenter le volume de la cavité buccale. Il est souvent assimilé au phonème /d/ occlusif, apico-dental, réalisé au bord inférieur des gencives où la pointe de la langue vient toucher la face interne des dents supérieures pour former l'obstacle et il est également non emphatique. Cette substitution résulte de la perte du trait emphatique qui est une conséquence de la pression de moindre effort puisque l'opposition est neutralisée donc le rendement fonctionnel est affaibli. Cette substitution se fait dans toutes les oppositions à l'initiale : [ðʕif] / [dʕif] « faible » [ðumu] / [dumu] « prends-le entre tes bras ! », en position médiane : [aðrub] / [adrub] « je frappe », [ma:ði] / [ma:di] « passé » et en finale : [mari:ð] / [mari:d] « malade » [rakað] / [rakad] « il a couru ».

7.4.2. Facteurs externes

- Facteur régional

Variable	Région			Total (effectif)	Total (Pourcentage)	Missing pourcentage	Khi-deux			Fisher's	
	Nord	Centre	Sud				Khi-deux	Ddi	Sig. Asymp. (bilatérale)	Fisher's	Sig. exacte. (bilatérale)
/ð/	20	11	10	41	45.5%						
/d/	10	13	10	33	36.6%						
/ð/- /d/	0	6	10	16	17.7%						
Total	30	30	30	90	100%	0.0%	38.658	4	0.000	35.955	0.000

Tableau 12. Phonème /ð/ : facteur régional

D'après le Tableau 12., nous observons que l'échantillon de la population testé indique que 66.6% des locuteurs du nord et 33.3% du sud maintiennent le phonème /ð/face à 36,6% du centre. En outre, ce résultat montre que 43.3% des locuteurs du centre assimilent le phonème /ð/ au phonème /d/ alors que le sud et le nord partagent le même résultat (33,3%). Par ailleurs, l'alternance de deux phonèmes est de 20% au centre et 33.3% au sud. En somme nous voyons que 45.5% des enquêtés emploient le phonème /ð/ et 36.6% l'assimilent au /d/ et 17.7% alternent les deux.

Ainsi, ce résultat confirme le rejet de l'hypothèse H0, (il n'y a pas de lien entre la région et l'assimilation de /ð/- /d/) et l'acceptation de l'hypothèse alternative puisque la valeur calculée de Khi-deux est de 38.658 alors que celle de Fisher's exact test est de 35.955 et la valeur de p est de 0.000.

- Facteur d'âge

Variable	Age			Total (effectif)	Total (Pourcentage)	Missing pourcentage	Khi-deux			Fisher's	
	+55	30-55	17-30				Khi-deux	Ddi	Sig. Asymp. (bilatérale)	Fisher's	Sig. exacte. (bilatérale)
/ð/	20	14	6	40	44.4%						
/d/	5	10	20	35	38.8%						
/ð/- /d/	5	6	4	15	16.6%						
Total	30	30	30	90	99.2%	0.8%	28.515	6	0.000	2.616	0.000

Tableau 13. Phonème /ð/ : facteur d'âge

66.6 % des locuteurs âgés de plus de 55 ans gardent le phonème /ǝ/, mais ceux âgés entre 30 et 55 ans et les moins de 30 ans le remplacent par le /d/ avec un pourcentage de 46.6 % et 20 % respectivement. En revanche, nous observons que 66.6 % des locuteurs de moins de 30 ans, 16.6 % pour les âgés de plus de 55 ans et 33.3 % pour les 30 à 55 ans substituent le phonème /d/ au phonème /ǝ/.

L'alternance des deux phonèmes se fait plus évidente chez les enquêtés dont l'âge se situe entre 30 et 55 ans (20%), viennent ensuite ceux âgés de plus de 55 ans (16.6%) et enfin les locuteurs de moins de 30 ans avec 13%.

De fait, les calculs montrent que la valeur de Khi-deux est de 28.515 et celle de Fisher's exact test est de 2.616 alors que la valeur de p est de 0.000, ce qui implique le rejet de l'hypothèse H0 (il n'y a pas de lien entre l'âge et l'assimilation de /ǝ/- /d/) et l'acceptation de l'hypothèse alternative.

En observant ce facteur nous remarquons que le phonème /ǝ/ se substitue différemment chez les jeunes et les plus âgés. Ainsi les jeunes sont moins conservateurs de la norme standard de la prononciation de ce phonème. Ce constat s'explique phonologiquement par la neutralisation de l'opposition /ǝ/-/d/ qui est le résultat de la faiblesse du rendement fonctionnel et socialement, par le fait que les jeunes sont exposés à la variante urbaine /d/ vue comme une variante supérieure et prestigieuse.

Il est à noter que cette faiblesse du rendement fonctionnel ne concerne pas le trait emphatique mais l'ordre apico-dental qui explique le fait qu'elle n'affecte pas les autres phonèmes emphatiques où l'opposition est maintenue.

- Facteur de sexe

Variable	Sexe		Total (Effectif)	Total (Pourcentage)	Missing pourcentage	Khi-deux			Fisher's	
	Homme	Femme				Khi-deux	Ddi	Sig. Asymp. (bilatérale)	Fisher's	Sig. exacte. (bilatérale)
/ǝ/	25	13	38	42.2%						
/d/	12	25	37	41.11%						
/ǝ/- /d/	8	7	15	16.6%						
Total	45	45	90	100%	17.8%	6.528	2	0.038	5.832	0.055

Tableau 14. Phonème /ǝ/ : facteur de sexe

D'après le Tableau 14., nous constatons que 55.5% des hommes et 28.8% des femmes réalisent le phonème /ǝ/ dans leur discours. Cependant 26.6% des locuteurs de sexe masculin produisent le

phonème /d/ à la place de /ð/ face à 55.5% des femmes et 17.7% des locuteurs et 15.5% des locutrices alternent les deux phonèmes.

Au total 42.2% des enquêtés maintiennent toujours le phonème /ð/, 41.11% l'assimilent au phonème /d/ et 16,6 % alternent les deux.

La différenciation entre les deux sexes se fait nette quant à la prononciation du phonème /ð/ où son assimilation en /d/ est plus fréquente chez les femmes.

De ce tableau, nous déduisons que la valeur de Khi-deux calculée pour la variable /ð/-/d/ est de 6.528 et la valeur de p est de 0.038 qui est une valeur significative. Alors nous acceptons l'hypothèse alternative. Nous ne prenons pas le résultat de Fisher's exact test en considération vu que les échantillons testés sont supérieurs au 5.

7.5. Le phonème /ð/

Le phonème /ð/ est un fricatif réalisé entre les dents où la pointe de la langue passe entre les dents inférieures et supérieures entraînant un rétrécissement du passage de l'air et produisant un bruit de friction. Il ressemble au phonème /θ/ pour ce qui est du lieu d'articulation mais avec une vibration des cordes vocales.

7.5.1. Facteurs internes

L'assimilation du phonème /ð/ au phonème /d/ s'expliquerait par des raisons propres au système interne de la langue attendu que l'ordre des phonèmes fricatifs interdentaires est assimilé à l'apico-dental, à l'instar de l'assimilation du phonème /θ/ au phonème /t/.

Cette assimilation produit un déséquilibre du système conduisant à une certaine économie qui se traduit par la réduction du phonème fricatif /ð/ pour des raisons purement structurelles en cherchant un certain équilibre du système.

7.5.2. Facteurs externes

• Facteur régional

Variable	Région			Total (effectif)	Total (Pourcentage)	Missing pourcentage	Khi-deux			Fisher's	
	Nord	Centre	Sud				Khi-deux	Ddi	Sig. Asymp. (bilatérale)	Fisher's	Sig. exacte. (bilatérale)
/ð/	17	12	20	49	54.4%						
/d/	10	14	8	32	35.5%						
/ð/- /d/	3	4	2	9	10%						
Total	30	30	30	90	100%	0.0%	8.638	2	0.013	8.328	0.014

Tableau 15. Phonème /ð/ : facteur régional

Le phonème /ð/ fricatif, inter-dental, oral et sonore est remplacé par le phonème /d/ occlusif, apico-dental, sonore et non-emphatique. L'examen des données fait voir d'une manière précise que le /ð/ se localise plutôt dans les régions du nord et du sud mais son assimilation au phonème /d/ est dominante dans le centre. La réalisation / ð / au nord, au sud et au centre est de 56.6%, 66.6% et 40% respectivement. Par ailleurs, son assimilation au /d/ est moins nette au nord (33,3%) et au sud (26.6%) comparée au centre avec un pourcentage qui atteint 46.6%. Les personnes interrogées des trois régions alternent, dans le même contexte, les deux phonèmes /ð/ et /d/ avec un pourcentage de 10%.

Le test de Khi-deux d'indépendance de variable, appliqué à nos données est de 8,638 et de Fisher's exact test est de 8.328, la valeur de p est de 0,013 et de 0.014 pour Fisher's exact test qui est statistiquement significative liée à un seuil de 5% ce qui signifie que l'hypothèse H0 est rejetée et l'hypothèse alternative liant la variable à la région est acceptée.

• Facteur d'âge

Variable	Age			Total (effectif)	Total (Pourcentage)	Missing pourcentage	Khi-deux			Fisher's	
	+55	30-55	17-30				Khi-deux	Ddi	Sig. Asymp. (bilatérale)	Fisher's	Sig. exacte. (bilatérale)
/ð/-/d/	20	15	18	53	58.8%						
/d/	10	10	12	32	35.5%						
/ð/-/d/	0	5	0	5	5.5%						
Total	30	30	30	90	99.8%	0.2%	9.363	2	0.009	9.434	0.10

Tableau 16. Phonème /ð/ : facteur d'âge

L'âge des enquêtés a une influence sur la réalisation du phonème /ð/ où il est plus appuyé chez les plus âgés (66.6%) mais son emploi devient moins fréquent chez ceux ayant un âge situé entre 30 et 55 ans (50%) et ceux ayant moins de 30 ans (60%).

L'assimilation du phonème /ð/ au phonème /d/ est croissante des plus jeunes aux plus âgés avec 40%, 33.3% et 35.5% respectivement. Néanmoins 5.5% des locuteurs alternent les deux phonèmes dans les mêmes circonstances.

Nous constatons que l'assimilation du phonème /ð/ au /d/ est en lien direct avec l'âge ce qui confirme l'hypothèse alternative et rejette l'hypothèse nulle car la valeur calculée de Khi-deux, pour la variable /ð/-/d/ et l'âge, est de 9.363 et celle de Fisher's exact test est de 9.434, la valeur de p est de 0.009 alors que la valeur 0.100 de Fisher's exact test est supérieure à la limite des 5%, ce qui confirme l'hypothèse alternative.

- Facteur de sexe

Variable	Sexe		Total (effectif)	Total (Pourcenta)	Missing pourcentage	Khi-deux			Fisher's	
	Homme	Femme				Khi-deux	Ddi	Sig. Asymp. (bilatérale)	Fisher's	Sig. exacte. (bilatérale)
/ð/	23	13	36	40%						
/d/	14	25	39	43.3%						
/ð/- /d/	8	7	15	16.6%						
Total	45	45	90	99.9%	00.1%	6.528	2	0.032	5.832	0.048

Tableau 17. Phonème /ð/ : facteur de sexe

Les hommes ont plus tendance à réaliser le phonème /ð/ dans leur discours (51.1%) que les femmes (28.8%). D'un autre côté, la production du phonème /d/ à la place de /ð/ dépasse d'un peu plus de la moitié chez les femmes avec un pourcentage qui atteint 55.5% contre 31.1% chez les hommes.

Quant à l'alternance des deux phonèmes, les deux sexes sont presque à égalité et réalisent 26.6 % pour les hommes et 23.3 % pour les femmes. En somme 40% maintiennent toujours le phonème /ð/, 43.3% les assimilent et 16,6 % alternent les deux.

De ces résultats nous déduisons que la valeur de Khi-deux calculée pour la variable /ð/ - /d/ est de 6.528 et la valeur de p est de 0.032 qui est une valeur significative. En conséquence nous rejetons l'hypothèse H0 (il n'y a pas de lien entre le sexe et l'assimilation de /ð/- /d/) et acceptons l'hypothèse alternative (il y a un rapport statistique entre la variable et le facteur de sexe).

8. Conclusion

Au terme de cette étude, le constat qui s'impose est que le système consonantique de la langue arabe parlée en Jordanie est en constante évolution.

Le premier résultat constaté est l'assimilation des phonèmes interdentaires /θ/, /ð/ et /ð/ aux phonèmes apico-dentaires /t/, /d/ qui se fait par la substitution du mode d'articulation fricatif au mode occlusif et le point d'articulation interdental à celui d'apico-dental, le changement en cours ayant débuté par l'affaiblissement de rendement fonctionnel de l'opposition comme facteur interne qui a conduit à la réduction de l'ordre interdental. Les trois phonèmes de cet ordre dépassent la marge de sécurité de leur zone articuloire vers les apico-dentaires. Cette réduction est conforme au principe de moindre effort mais toujours dans le but fixé à atteindre les besoins communicatifs.

Nous avons constaté que les faits d'assimilation sont également relatifs aux facteurs externes au système phonologique contribuant ainsi à ces variations. De même, cette assimilation est marquée dans le centre du pays et progresse dans les autres régions particulièrement chez les jeunes. Selon le test Khi-deux, le facteur de sexe a donc un impact faible sur cette assimilation

L'autre ordre touché par l'évolution est le vélaire dont la variante [tʃ] de mode affriqué du phonème /k/ est en voie de disparition en raison de l'économie de système gouverné par des facteurs sociolinguistiques concernant le classement social et le marquage de l'urbanisation et de la ruralité. De même cet ordre vélaire est également marqué par la perte de l'emploi du phonème /g/ en faveur du glottal /ʔ/ causée par la faiblesse de la pertinence du phonème /ʔ/ au sein du système de la langue en laissant le phonème /k/ de nouveau sans son correspondant sonore /g/.

Le contact avec d'autres populations venant de Palestine, du Liban et de Syrie est une des causes de cette évolution, notamment au centre du pays et chez les jeunes de moins de 35 ans.

Ce qui précède montre que le système de la langue parlée pourra être réduit de 4 phonèmes et passera de 26 à 22 phonèmes en raison de l'affaiblissement de rendement fonctionnel qui a conduit à la neutralisation des oppositions. De surcroît cette réduction est le résultat des facteurs externes liés au contact du parler jordanien avec d'autres variantes du parler arabe en raison de mouvements de populations vers la Jordanie causés par plusieurs conflits politiques et des guerres douloureuses.

L'un des résultats marquants de cette étude souligne que la région et l'âge sont les deux moteurs externes de l'évolution du système consonantique et que l'impact du sexe des locuteurs est en recul constant même si les femmes arabes restent plus innovatrices en employant la forme urbaine et prestigieuse qui est confirmée par d'autres études sociolinguistiques de la variation en langue arabe telles que (Al-Wer 2014, 396) et Abdel-Jawad à Amman (1981) et Nablus (1987), Sallam au Caire (1980) et Schmidt au Caire (1974). Néanmoins, ce recul résulte du fait que les hommes, en particulier les plus jeunes, légitiment actuellement le recours à cette forme urbaine prestigieuse et abandonnent la forme sentie comme archaïque et dépassée.

L'une des observations au cours de cette étude est la manipulation de la variation phonétique par les locuteurs dans différents contextes sociaux visant à construire un discours de pouvoir exercé sur l'autre. Cette observation pourrait faire dans l'avenir l'objet d'une autre recherche sur la variation.

En résumé, l'étude confirme que le système est en mouvement continu et que les facteurs internes et externes sont les moteurs de ce mouvement. La langue évolue selon ses propres lois internes et ses locuteurs sont les agents de cette évolution.

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The Jordanian Arabic discourse marker *bas*:

A pragmatic analysis

Narjes Ennasser and Rimon Hijazin

The present study aims at discussing the various pragmatic functions of the Arabic discourse marker (DM) *bas* in Jordanian Arabic (JA). The DM *bas*, which literally means “enough”, has over time accumulated a variety of contextual meanings, and has become one of the most commonly used discourse markers in the daily interactions of JA native speakers. In order to meet the purpose of this study, a corpus of 22 dyadic conversations by native speakers of JA was compiled. 605 instances of the DM *bas* were extracted from the data. An eclectic analytical methodology has been adopted as a theoretical framework in the analysis of the DM *bas*, particularly Fraser’s (2006a) grammatical-pragmatic approach. In pragmatically marked contexts, the results revealed that the DM *bas* can be considered multifunctional serving twelve different functions: Denying of expectation; making a repair; indicating insufficiency of information; returning to main topic; signaling topic shift; showing a threat; mitigating a face-threatening act (FTA); indicating a completion of cognitive process; and acting as a filler marker, directive marker, expressive marker, and modifier.

Keywords: contextual meaning, corpus, discourse marker *bas*, Jordanian Spoken Arabic, pragmatics

1. Introduction

Among the many aspects of pragmatics, discourse markers (henceforth: DMs) such as *oh*, *well*, *y’know*, *but*, *inšāʔallah*, *ʔādī*, etc. have become part of a growing body of work in the last four decades or so. Despite the disagreement between researchers (Fraser 2009, Redeker 1991, Schiffrin 1987, among others) on a single all-inclusive definition of discourse markers, some have nonetheless posited definitions to account for the nature and functions of these discourse elements. Schiffrin (1987: 31), for example, defines them as “sequentially dependent elements that bracket units of talk.” Redeker (1991: 1168) maintains that a discourse marker is

a word or phrase that is uttered with the primary function of bringing to the listener’s attention a particular kind of linkage of the upcoming utterance with the immediate

discourse context. An utterance in this definition is an intonationally and structurally bounded, usually clausal unit.

Schiffirin (1987) and Zwicky (1985) set forth a number of characteristics for DMs. These characteristics can be summed up into three: Non-truth conditionality, optionality, and connectivity:

1. DMs are syntactically detachable from a given sentence since they do not contribute to the truth conditionality of the propositional content of utterances.
2. DMs are syntactically optional, in that their removal does not change the grammaticality of a sentence nor the semantic relationship between sentence constituents. DMs have to have a range of independently prosodic contours, i.e. DMs are both accented and separated from their surrounding context by pauses, intonation breaks, or both.
3. In order to add textual coherence, DMs have to be able to signal relationship between discourse units at both local (the host discourse unit) and global levels (situational context).

Schiffirin (1987: 24-25) argues that DMs have to be able to operate on different planes of discourse: participation framework, information state, ideational structure, action structure, and exchange structure. Schiffirin's five-plan model is roughly equivalent to Halliday and Hasan's distinction between external and internal relations within texts (Halliday and Hasan 1976). External relations, which are basically oriented to what happens outside the text rather than within, relate to Schiffirin's ideational structure plan; whereas internal relations, oriented to what is being said rather than to what is being done, are expressed somewhat on the other plans that she suggests.

DMs have a multiplicity of functions on the textual, interpersonal and cognitive discourse levels. To begin with, the textual level, DMs relate discourse units semantically at both the local and global levels of discourse. In other words, they create coherence among discourse units, for instance the DM 'after all' in *I think it will fly. After all, we built it right* relates the latter clause deictically to the former one. Interpersonally, DMs express solidarity between interlocutors and show attitudes, feelings, and evaluations towards the illocutionary force of the discourse units, such as *just* in *I am just proud of you*. Finally, on the cognitive level, DMs allow a speaker to buy time in order to solve cognitive problems or to reformulate previous utterances such as *anyway* in *Anyway, I was wondering if you can lend me your car tonight*.

The aim of this study is to examine the pragmatic functions of the DM *bas* in Jordanian Spoken Arabic (JSA). The DM *bas*, which is apparently widely used across the Arab World, is virtually equivalent to *but, enough, well, as soon as, only, just, stop it*. It is mostly used in spoken informal discourse since it is not considered part of the Standard Arabic lexicon. Most probably the lexical expression

bas has been borrowed from Indian languages during spice trading era since the same term is still found in today's Urdu and Hindi languages of India. However, it is highly likely that the expression might have entered these languages' lexicon from the Persian (Oxford 2021). The variety of pragmatic meanings and functions that *bas* encodes will be the focus of the discussion under section 7. Next section discusses some of the available literature relevant to the focus of this study.

2. Review of related literature on discourse markers

Studies into the nature and function of discourse markers can be divided into two main groups:

1. coherence studies in which scholars, such as Schiffrin, Redeker, and Fraser, investigate DMs' contribution to discourse coherence on the local and global levels;
2. relevance studies, spearheaded by Blakemore, Sperber, and Wilson, have analyzed DMs as encoding procedural rather than conceptual (or representational) meaning.

Fraser (2006b) has challenged the latter claim on DMs by suggesting that any linguistic form, DMs included, encodes not just a procedural and conceptual meaning, but in fact three types of semantic information, namely, procedural, conceptual, and combinatorial. Procedural deals with the role constituents play in processing propositional representation for the sake of creating a coherent mental representation between the hearer and the speaker. Conceptual specifies the mapping of constituents onto concepts. Combinatorial indicates the relationship between constituents in order to produce more complex semantic structures.

With regard to the individual meaning of a DM, Hansen (1997, 1998a) argues that each DM encodes a core meaning (monosemic) of a general nature, for instance the DM *but* has the core meaning of a "simple contrast;" in addition to subtle meanings being derived from the core meaning depending on the context (polysemic). Such approach to the meanings of DMs, which is known as a polysemic approach is different from the "polyfunctional approach" to the analysis of DMs. Polyfunctional approach stipulates that certain DMs may fulfill many different functions motivated by pragmatic domains, such as the epistemic domain, speech act domain, or propositional domain. For example, in *Sue is hungry, so she must be grumpy* the knowledge of S1 *Sue is hungry* justifies the inference of S2 *she must be grumpy*.

In her relevance theory, Blakemore (2002: 5) rejects the contribution of DMs (she later designates them as discourse connectives) to discourse coherence. She introduced the distinction between two types of semantic meaning, viz. procedural meaning and conceptual meaning. Blakemore claimed that discourse connectives encode procedural meaning only, something which

influences future DM research. Blakemore's theory of procedural and conceptual seems to echo Gricean notion about what is explicitly said and what is conventionally implicated.

English DMs, such as *well, so, I mean, but, y'know, hey, oh, etc.*, have attracted considerable attention from those interested in this phenomenon. Studies into the nature and functions of DMs have gained traction in tandem with the development of many linguistic disciplines, especially pragmatics and discourse analysis.

Many linguists have adopted Relevance theoretical framework (RT) into investigating the functions of DMs in verbal communication. Schiffrin (1987) analysed DMs *well, y'know, and, because, then, but, I mean, oh, or, and so*. Under the label "discourse connectives," Blakemore (1987) discussed DMs *and, all, you see, after, moreover, but, so, and furthermore*. Watts (1988) discussed various uses of DMs *actually, really, and basically*. Moreover, Jucker (1993) covered some pragmatic uses of the DM *well*.

Other linguists adopted a pragmatic-functional approach in order to highlight the role DMs play in the coherence of the discourse segments in which they appear. As an example, many studies have analyzed the DM *yeah* (Drummon and Hopper 1993, Wong 2000, Fuller 2003). These studies have revealed four pragmatic functions of the DM *yeah*:

1. *yeah* as a continuer, i.e. to encourage the speaker to continue speaking;
2. *yeah* as an agreement marker to yes/no question;
3. *yeah* as a turn taking marker during conversation; and
4. *yeah* as a pause or repair marker.

3. Review of literature on Arabic discourse markers

There have been a good number of studies with substantive findings tackling the pragmatic functions of Arabic DMs in more details. The DM *inšāʔallah* "God's willing," for example, has been studied extensively (Nazzal 2005, Clift and Helani 2010, Mehawesh and Jaradat 2015, Al-Rawafi and Gunawan 2018). Arabs in general and Muslims in particular are inclined to use this DM very frequently in their daily speech as a confirmation of one's religious, linguistic, and cultural identity. Analysis of a collection of natural utterances using various research methodologies and frameworks (such as Conversation Analysis (CA), Relevance Theory RT, etc.), has revealed several pragmatic functions for the DM , as a result of its overuse in the daily interaction. Below are the main functions that are shared between these studies:

1. Threatening (e.g., *inšāʔallah you touch the TV, meaning, I dare you touch the TV*).
2. Consenting to a request (e.g., A: *Please bring me a cup of coffee*. B: *inšāʔallah*).

3. The DM *inšāʔallah* is most frequently associated with promising. The effect of the perlocutionary act of *inšāʔallah* depends on the close relationship between the interlocutor and the listener, the context of the utterance, and the likelihood of an event to happen in the future. The misuse of *inšāʔallah* between the interlocutor and the listener leads to face-threatening act, which is the failure to fulfill the promise. The studies concluded that the majority of the non-literal meanings of *inšāʔallah* flout Gricean maxim of quality which stresses on speakers to be truthful.

Using CA and RT approaches, Kanakri and Al-Harashsheh (2013) analyzed the pragmatic functions and translatability of the DM *ṭayyib* and its cognate *ṭabb* (lit. “Okay, fine, good”) in the Jordanian colloquial Arabic. They arrived at enumerating ten pragmatic functions: to fill in the gap, to give permission, to request patience, to signal end of discourse, to mark challenge or confrontation, to mitigate or soften disagreement, to introduce new topic, to show objection, to stop for evaluation of the situation, and finally to indicate acceptance or agreement.

Marmorstein (2016) investigated the DM *yaʔnī* (lit. “it means”) in the Cairene Spoken Arabic of Egypt. Three pragmatic uses of *yaʔnī* were distinguished: stating new information, elaborating on the given information which the speaker assumes to be shared with the hearer, and finally stressing the point by repetition. It has been shown that *yaʔni* is not just a randomly used DM within speech, but that it has a distribution that is highly systematic and functionally motivated.

Al-Khawaldeh (2018) examined the uses of the DM *wallahi* “by God” in Jordanian Spoken Arabic. The data consisted of eight hours of spoken discourse. The findings revealed ten functions for the use of the DM *wallahi*: Introducing a threat, an apology or a compliment, mitigating a request, acting as a filler marker, etc.

Other Arabic DMs that have been treated include but are not limited to *yamʔawwad* “well, please, okay” (Alazzawie 2014); *maʔ nafsak* “leave me alone, get lost, mind your own business” (Al Rousan 2015); and *māšī* “alright” (Al-Shishtawi 2020).

4. Purpose of the study and research questions

The main objective of the present study is to investigate the pragmatic functions of the DM *bas* in Jordanian Spoken Arabic. It is the hope that this piece of work will add some value to the literature tackling the phenomenon of DMs within the context of spoken Arabic. The researchers attempt to answer the following questions of which the first one is very obvious and straightforward:

1. What are the pragmatic meanings and functions of the DM *bas* in the Modern Spoken Arabic discourse?
2. Since DMs can be identified by prosody as a “separate tone unit” (Fung and Carter 2007: 413), the following question must be asked: What effects do extralinguistic features (such as the stress, prosodic pause, etc.) have on the interpretation of the pragmatic functions of DMs?

5. Theoretical framework

Generally, DMs can have, besides a core meaning, a variety of pragmatic interpretations depending on the linguistic context that host them. The core procedural meaning carried by the DM *bas* is roughly one of a contrast, viz. “but;” while the other non-literal meanings can be inferred pragmatically. For the sake of a qualitative analysis of the various uses of the DMs *bas*, an eclectic analytical methodology has been adopted as a theoretical framework. It encompasses Conversation Analysis (CA), Discourse Analysis (DA), Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Politeness Theory, and Fraser’s (2006a) grammatical-pragmatically approach.

The study adopts Fraser’s (2006a: 191) definition of a DM. “[A] lexical expression (LE) functions as a discourse marker if, it occurs in S2-initial position, LE signals that a semantic relationship holds between S2 and S1 which is one of: a. elaboration; b. contrast; c. inference; or d. temporality.” The segments S1 and S2 must encode a complete message. The four semantic relationships are meant to be taken exhaustively since other relationships might exist. Fraser (ibid.) argues that since a DM is a type of relationship then it does not contribute to the semantic meaning of the proposition in which it occurs. It follows that a DM does not contribute to the truth conditionality of the S2 segment.

Fraser (2006a) discussed DMs under a general cover term he called Pragmatic Markers. He approached DMs from a grammatical-pragmatic perspective focusing on what DMs are and what their grammatical status is. He maintains that the DM as a linguistic expression functions to signal a semantic relationship between units of discourse (i.e. between the message in the second segment, S2, and the message in the preceding segment, S1) and thereby contributes to discourse coherence.

Fraser (2006a) described DMs properties on various linguistic levels:

1. Phonologically, DMs has the unmarked feature of being stressed especially if they are monosyllabic, e.g., *so* and *but*. They are followed by a pause especially if placed in segment initial position.
2. Morphologically, DMs can be either monosyllabic (e.g., *and* and *thus*), polysyllabic (e.g., *furthermore* and *before*), or a complete phrase (e.g., *that is to say*).

3. Syntactically, the DM as a linguistic expression is drawn from the syntactic categories of coordinate conjunctions (e.g., *and*, *but*, *yet...*), subordinate conjunctions (e.g., *although*, *since*, *because ...*), adverbials (e.g., *anyway*, *then*, *still*), prepositions (e.g., *despite of*, *instead of*), or propositional phrases (e.g., *after all*, *on the contrary ...*), and has a core meaning enriched by the context.

In relation to the types of semantic relations DMs signal between adjacent discourse segments, Fraser (2009, 2006a) distinguishes four functional classes of DMs:

1. Contrastive discourse markers such as *but*, *in spite of*, *although*, *nevertheless*, *in comparison*, *yet...*
2. Elaborative discourse markers, such as *and*, *above all*, *in addition*, *moreover...*
3. Inferential discourse markers, such as *so*, *after all*, *consequently*, *thus*, *then*, *therefore...*
4. Temporal discourse markers, such as *then*, *after*, *before*, *meanwhile*, *when...*

6. Methodology

The present study aims at investigating and describing the pragmatic functions of the DM *bas* in Jordanian Spoken Arabic (JSA). Since the DM *bas* is used in spoken discourse, the data of the study is grounded on naturally-occurring oral discourse. Data has been extracted from a corpus of twenty-two dyadic conversations by native speakers of Jordanian Arabic. Each conversation lasts between ten to thirty minutes (in total of 7.5 hours). The participants were university students with an average age of 20 years. The recorded conversations occurred between same-sex and mixed-sex participants with an equal number of males and females. Participants have been informed ahead of time that they will be taped and their consents have been obtained; however, the rationale behind the study was kept hidden for the sake of avoiding any impact on the naturalness of the conversation. The recorded conversations have been transliterated. 605 occurrences of the DM *bas* were identified in the corpus which consisted of 83054 words.

The data was examined thoroughly in order to arrive at the various meanings and functions of the DM *bas*, paying a significant attention to the prosodic feature of each utterance. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, the DM *bas* has never been studied within the context of Jordanian Spoken Arabic.

7. Results and Discussion

After analyzing the data, eleven pragmatic functions were identified for the DM *bas*. Following is a treatment of each individual function with some illustrative examples from the corpus.

7.1. Denial of expectation

The first meaning of *bas* relates to Lakoff (1971) and Blakemore (1987) analysis of the English DM *but* in which the hearer expects to hear something which is then denied.

- (1.a) ما بيقطع فرض بس هو كذاب
mā bi-ygṭaṣ farḍ bas huwwa kaḍḍāb
 NEG IMPF abandon_{3SGM} prayer yet he (is) liar
 “He has never abandoned obligatory prayer yet he is a liar”
- (1.b) إطلع عليها، حلوة بس هي سمرة
ʔittallaṣ ʔalay-hā / ḥilwa bas hiyya samra
 IMP look_{2SG} at-her / pretty yet she black
 “Look at her, she is pretty yet she is black”

In example (1.a) above, *bas* functions as a linking particle between the two conjuncts. The first conjunct *mā bi-ygṭaṣ farḍ* “He has never abandoned obligatory prayer” implies something which is contradicted or denied by the second conjunct *kaḍḍāb* “a liar.” The implication relation between the two conjuncts is based on the assumption that the faithful are normally honest. A religious person who always performs his/her daily prayers on time is expected not to lie.

Example (1.b) represents a vicious slur one would expect to hear every now and then from racist individuals. To them beauty is attributed to women with white complexion, and thus being beautiful and black would contradict their assumption.

In a similar vein, the DM *bas* in the below examples encodes a contrastive/oppositional relationship between two contrasting situations. Fraser (1999) claims that, by and large, contrastive markers signal a relationship of contrast or denial between S1 and S2.

- (1.c.) في الشمال الجو تثلج بس في الجنوب مطر.
fi ʔš-šamāl ʔil-jaw talj bas fi ʔil-janūb maṭar
 in the-north the-weather snow but in the-south rain
 “In the north it is snowing, but down south it is raining”

- (1.d.) انا بحكي انجليزي باللهجة البريطانية بس أخوي بحكي باللهجة الامريكية.
 ʔanā b-aḥkī ʔinglīzī bi-ʔil-lahjeh ʔil-birṭaniyya
 I IMPF speak_{1SG} English with-the-accent the-British
 bas ʔaxū-ī b-iḥkī bi-ʔil-lahjeh ʔil-amrikiyya
 whereas brother-my IMPF speak_{3SGM} with-the-accent the-American
 “I speak English with the British accent, whereas my brother speaks it with the American”

In the above example (1.c.), the first clause has a different, rather contrasting, meaning from the clause after *bas*. Obviously there is an incompatibility between the *snowing* and the *raining* weather conditions. The same argument applies to (1.d.).

7.2. Repair/correction Marker

This function of the DM *bas* does not signal contradiction as is the case in the previous function. *Bas* is employed here as a device for correction. When considering the below scenario in which speaker A makes a comment after seeing speaker B talking to a handsome man; the use of *bas* serves to correct or repair the assumption made by speaker A.

- (2.a.) A: الظاهر بتحبّيه؟ شكله حلو كثير
 ʔid-dāhir bi-thībbī-h? šakl-u ḥilū ktīr
 the-obvious IMPF love_{3SGF}-him? appearance-his handsome very
 “It looks like you are in love with him? He’s very handsome”
 B: ما بنحب بعض بس احنا أصدقاء.
 mā bi-nḥib baʔaḍ / bas ʔiḥnā ʔaṣḍiqā?
 NEG IMPF love_{1PL} together / just we (are) friends
 “We are not in love, just friends”

7.3. Marker of insufficiency

The DM *bas* may also encode insufficient information in the speech of interlocutors. By way of illustration:

(3.a) A: إنتي كسرتي المزهرية؟
ʔinti kasartī ʔil-mazhariyya
you_{PF} break_{3SGF} the-vase
“Did you break the vase?”

B: آه، بس....
āh bas...
“Yeah, well...”

(3.b.) A: بتحكي انجليزي زي الببل.
bi-thkī ʔinglīzī zay ʔil-bulbul
IMPFspeak_{3SGF} English like the-nightingale
“She speaks English like a pro”

B: بس، هي ربيت بالأردن. كيف ممكن هيك؟
bas / hiyyī rībyat b-ʔil-urdun kayf mumkin hayk
well / she_{PF} raise_{3SGF} in-the-Jordan how possible that?
“Well, she was raised in Jordan. How is that possible?”

Speaker B in the first example seems to stop short in her reply to the question about who is responsible for breaking the vase. Her mother (i.e. A) expects her child (i.e. B) to provide some extenuating circumstances in order to lessen the punishment that would incur as a result. The follow-up question that one normally expects from speaker A is *bas šou?* “Well what? If B would have said yes, this would be sufficient and direct.

In (3.b), speaker B finds the statement by speaker A insufficient and lacking some elaboration. Based on previous knowledge of Jordanian poor education system, speaker B presupposes that Jordanian public school system does not qualify the person being referred to in the conversation to be fluent in English. Therefore, speaker B seems bewildered and thus needs some additional information from A, such as “Did she study in prestigious private schools?,” “Are her parents native speakers of English?” and the like.

7.4. Return to the main topic

In the dialogue below, The DM *bas* signals a return to the main topic being discussed which has no relation with the current topic. It can be readily noticed here that *bas* in this case is always found in utterance-initial position.

- (4.a) A: كانت سهرة حلوة على كل المقاييس.
kānat sahra ḥilwī Ṣalā kul ?il-maqāīs
 PFbe_{3SGF} soirée beautiful on all the-measures
 “It was such a beautiful soirée par excellence.
 B: بس شو بالنسبة لتصليح عجل سيارتي.
bas šū bi-?in-nsbī la-taṣlīḥ Ṣajal sayyārat-ī
 but what with-regard to-fixing tyre car-my
 “But what about fixing my car tyre”

The main concern of speaker B was the fixing of her car tyre. She wanted to interrupt whatever conversation was in progress at the time and simply returned to the main topic of focus, i.e. fixing the tyre of her car, which seemingly had been under consideration prior to talking about the soirée.

7.5. Topic shift

For the sake of continuing communication between interlocutors, often the DM *bas* serves as a topic initiator, in that it introduce new information to the ongoing conversation. The speaker has the burden of choosing the right time to introduce the new, yet related, topic and, by the same token, the listener is responsible for processing the new information on the basis of shared background knowledge. As a topic shift, the DM *bas* signals separation between discourse units. Almost always it is not located in utterance initial position:

- (5.a) كندا فتحت ابواب الهجرة، بس بحكوا العمر لازم تحت الاربعين
kanadā fataḥa ?abwāb ?il-hijra,
 Canada PFopen_{3SGF} doors the-immigration
bas b-iḥkū ?il-ṣomr lāzim taḥit ?il-arbaʿīn
 but IMPFsay_{3PLM} the-age must under the-forty
 “Canada has opened its doors for immigration, but they say that one must be under the age of 40”

The DM *bas* in (5.a) is used to introduce the new topic “the age requirement” which, in turn, is related to the topic under consideration “immigration to Canada.”

7.6. Filler marker

Words that are often considered conversational fillers or gap fillers (such as *like, um, ah uh, so, etc.*) are employed during conversations for a variety of reasons: To take or hold the floor, to indicate pause or hesitation, among other functions. By using certain filler while conversing, a speaker seems to be engaged in a sort of cognitive processing tasks like retrieving information, inferring, or reasoning, in order to eventually formulate the idea in the appropriate wordings. Fillers do not carry a communicative message by speakers (Aijmer 2002). In the corpus of the study, Jordanian native speakers tend to employ the DM *bas* as a filler marker:

- (6.a) A: مالك مش على بعضك؟
Mālak muš ʕalā baʕḍa-k
 what-with-you NEG on self-your
 “What’s going on with you?”
- B: والله ما في شيء بسسس الاولاد جابولي الصداع
w-allahi mā fi šīʔ / basss ʔil-awlād jabūlī
 by-God NEG there thing / you know the-children PFbring_{3PLM}
ʔṣ-ṣudāʕ
 the-headache
 “Nothing important, you know, kids give me a headache”

Speaker B seems to be unwilling to reveal what is bothering him probably because he does not like to discuss family matters with friends, colleagues or relatives. Therefore he resorts to the use of the DM *bas* in order to buy some time to think about an appropriate general reply which satisfies the interlocutor’s curiosity and at the same time does not incur any FTA. The elongation of the sound /s/ in *basss* is a clear indication of an ongoing mental activity.

7.7. Directive

On the interpersonal level, the DM *Bas* may be used to give orders or commands. It encodes a conceptual meaning such as, *stop it* and *enough*.

- (8.a) بس يعني بس.
bas yaʕnī bas
 enough_{IMPF}mean_{3SGM} enough
 “Enough is enough”

- (8.b) بس، اسكت.
bas / ʔuskut
 enough / _{IMP}shut-up_{2SG}
 “Enough, shut up”

In the example (8.a), the sequencing of the DM *bas* is quite noticeable. Fraser (2006a) considers the first DM in the sequence to be the primary one, and the second one is for emphasis. The relationship between interlocutors governs the use of the DM *bas* in such cases. Such use of *bas* is only expected from people with higher or similar status and power, parents and children or husbands and wives respectively. It can be noticed that *bas*, in both (8.a and 8.b) can stand as a distinct utterance and as a tone unit by its own right. Typically, prosody plays a pivotal role in interpreting the appropriate meaning(s) of DMs. DMs can be stressed or separated from their surrounding context by pauses and/or intonational breaks (Watts 1988).

7.8. Expressive marker

Within a conversation, the DM *bas* may also be used to express feelings of surprise or disbelief vis à vis the propositional content of a previous utterance. Such an emotive meaning of the DM *bas* is usually conveyed via a rising intonation with a high pitch, and occupies a complete conversational turn. The “intonation of exclamation,” as Bolinger (1989: 248) calls it, is expected to show the voice in some manner “out of control.” The following example illustrates this point:

- (9.a.) A: كم بيعطوكي راتب بشغلك الجديد؟
kam b-yaʕṭū-kī rātīb bi-šugli-k ʔil-jadīd
 how-much IMPF-give_{3PLM}-you_F salary at-work-your the-new
 “How much do you make a month in your new job?”
 B: ٣٥٠ دينار
350 dinār
 “350 dinars”
 A: بس!
Bas
 “That’s it”
 B: آه... بس
āāh bas
 Yup / that’s it
 “Yup... that’s it”

In the example above, speaker A is asking B about her monthly salary. Speaker A was surprised to learn that a prestigious company where B was recently hired would pay its employees such low wages. The DM *bas* here signals a mismatch between what is explicitly stated by speaker A and the background knowledge of speaker B. Interestingly, the DM *bas* in this example retains its adversative value. In uttering *bas*, one may interpret it as, *what are you talking about?! You must be joking?! I can't believe it! I am completely shocked!* However, these emotive utterances are not stated explicitly instead are implied in the intonation.

In reply to speaker A's astonishment and disbelief, speaker B confirms his answer by employing another *bas* and oft-times followed by further explanations or justifications of the subject matter.

7.9. Act of threat

This function of the DM *bas* serves to introduce a threat. In using *bas*, the illocutionary force of an utterance shows the speaker's intent to harm someone else as an act of retaliation:

- (9.a.) **يس اشوفه مرة ثانية بأفرجيه!**
bas ašūf-ū marra tanīa b-ʔafarj-ih
 when IMPFsee_{1SG}-him time another IMPFshow_{1SG}-him
 “If I see him again, you will see what happens!”
- (9.b.) **يس يطلع لي، والله لأموته!**
bas yīṭlaʔ lī, wa-allah la-ʔamawwt-ū
 if IMPFshow-up_{3SGM} to-me (oath particle)-God (asseverative)-IMPFkill_{1SG}-him
 “If he just shows up, I swear I will kill him!”

In both of the examples above, the speaker shows a commitment to do a future harmful act, for example, beating. It can be readily noticed that the DM *bas*, when it functions as an act of threat, introduces the subordinate conditional clause “the protasis” in the conditional sentence. According to Al-Khawaldeh (2018), conditional sentences encode the speech act of threat in Arabic.

7.10. Redress of face-threatening act (FTA)

The DM *bas* may act as a face-threat mitigator at the interpersonal level. It mitigates some sort of confrontation (i.e., FTA) every time the speaker disagrees (rather than agrees) with an opinion, refuses (rather than grants) a request, or rejects (rather than accepts) an offer (Brown and Levinson 1987). The DM *bas* here is used as a politeness strategy aimed at saving the addressee public self-image. Consider the following example:

- (10.a) A: **ممکن آخذ سيارتك؟**
mumkin ʔāxuḍ sayyārta-k
 can IMPFtake_{1SG} car-your
 “Do you mind me taking your car?”
- B: **ممم.. بس، عندي مشوار ضروري.**
bas / ʔind-ī mišwār ɖarūrī
 but / with-me errand important
 “Mmm... well, I have to go somewhere important”

The presence/absence of *bas* in such instances plays a significant role in changing their propositional content (or illocutionary force), since requests are usually regarded as an FTA (Brown and Levinson 1987). By rejecting the request made by speaker A “borrowing the car,” speaker B is inevitably

committing an FTA against speaker A. For the sake of minimizing such FTA and thus saving speaker A's face, the DM *bas* becomes handy. It can be readily noticed that, in such utterances, the DM *bas* is always found in clause initial position and followed by a phonological pause.

7.11. Modifier

Among its various pragmatic meanings, DM *bas* may also act as a modifier in the following examples:

- (11.a.) A: كم معك مصاري؟
kam maʕ-ak mašārī
how-much with-you money
“How much money have you got?”
B: بس خمس دنانير.
bas xams danānīr
only five dinars
“Only five dinars”
- (11.b.) A: عندك منه كُم قصير؟
ʕind-ak minn-u kum qašīr
with-you from-it sleeve short
“Do you have short-sleeved one (the shirt)?”
B: لا. بس كُم طويل.
lā bas kum ṭawīl
NEG only sleeve long
“Nope. Only the long sleeve”

In (11.a.), speaker B tries to specify exactly the amount of money he currently has, while in (11.b.), the salesperson at the clothing store specifies the type of shirts she has in stock excluding other types.

7.12. Completion of cognitive process

The usage of *bas* as an indicator of completed cognitive process is yet another pragmatic function of this amazing DM nonetheless it was less frequent in the corpus of the study. Only four instances of this function have been found. The excerpt below illustrates this function clearly noting the co-occurrence of the cognition-related verb *laqīt-ha* “I figured it out.” The two other verbs found in the corpus are *ʔitzakart* “I remembered” and *fihint* “I understood.”

- (12.a.) A: شو هو أخضر من بَرَا واحمر واسود من جو؟
 šū huwwa ʔaxḍar min barrā w-ʔaḥmar w-ʔaswad min jūwwa
 what it green from outside and-red and-black from inside
 “What is green on the outside but red and black inside?”
- B: بس لقيتها، البطيخة
 bas laqīt-ha ʔil-baṭṭīxa
 oh _{IMPF}figure_{1SG}-it the-water-melon
 “Oh I got it, the watermelon”

The co-occurrence of the DM *bas* with the verb figure out/got in the above example indicates that the speaker has been engaged in a cognitive process and has just completed it.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study has provided a detailed analysis of the pragmatic functions of the DM *bas* when used in different contexts. It can be concluded that the linguistic context plays an important role in determining the functions (Schiffrin 1987, Blakemore 2002, Fraser 2006a, b). Moreover, it might be difficult for a non-native speaker of Arabic to comprehend such functions.

For almost the past four decades (since 1970s), there has been a growing interest in the definition, nature and pragmatic functions of DMs. This study demonstrated some of the various pragmatic meanings and functions encoded in the DM *bas* within the context of Jordanian Spoken Arabic. In light of mainly Fraser’s (2006a) grammatical-pragmatic theoretic framework, the study has identified a set of functions DM *bas* serves within interaction: Denying of expectation, making a repair, indicating insufficiency of information, returning to main topic, signaling topic shift, showing a threat, mitigating an FTA, indicating a completion of a cognitive process, and acting as a filler marker, directive marker, expressive marker, and modifier.

The DM *bas* has a variety of meanings. However, this does not make such a lexical expression ambiguous since its linguistic environment helps clarify any ambiguity. Furthermore, the DM *bas*, as is the case for almost all DMs, can be done without since it does not add to the truth value of the utterance. That is, the sentence remains true or false regardless of the relationship encoded by *bas*.

DMs can pose a problem during the translation process. However, careful analysis of the micro- and macro-linguistic contexts will allow the translator to find the equivalent term in the target language. Naturally, the context of using the expression can solve the comprehension problem

whether in translation or during oral interaction. Moreover, it must be added that the prosodic features make the interpretation of the functions of the DM *bas* easier.

More detailed studies to analyze DMs cross-linguistically and cross-culturally covering their pragmatic functions and prosodic features are recommended. A complementary study by collecting data from other Arabic dialects is also recommended.

List of abbreviations

F	Feminine
IMPF	Imperfect
M	Masculine
PF	Perfect
PL	Plural
SG	Singular
IMP	Imperative

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Les noirs dans les dialectes tunisiens : la terminologie de la discrimination de couleur¹

Samia Ben Amor

An understanding of the history of slavery is central to the analysis of discrimination against black people in Tunisia. Black community in North Africa is connected to the slave trade. Even though slavery was abolished in Tunisia since 1846, black Tunisians still face discrimination related to their ancestors. This is reflected in the everyday use of words such as ‘abd or wṣīf [slave], kaḥlūš [a pejorative term for “black”] and šūšān [which translates to “liberated slave”] which are widely used to identify a black person. As we will see, in Tunisian Arabic language blackness as a physical characteristic often hints at an alleged slavery past.

Keywords : Slaves, freedmen, slave descendants, Tunisia, Tunisian dialects, slavery, Saharan trade slave, blackness.

1. Introduction

Le dialecte tunisien contient un certain nombre des formules et des mots qui loin d'être anodines, véhiculent des représentations stéréotypées et dévalorisantes de l'autre. Certaines de ces formules sont très courantes et largement employées à l'orale surtout. Cet article examine un certain nombre de mots et d'expressions utilisées dans la communication quotidienne des tunisiens pour désigner les personnes à peaux noire, en prenant en considération presque exclusivement le registre linguistique de la langue arabe "dialectale" tunisienne dans ses différentes versions.² L'arabe dialectal tunisien n'étant pas officiellement écrit, se pose tout d'abord la question de la transcription des mots. Quel système choisir ? Est-il mieux d'utiliser l'alphabet arabe, celui phonétique ou un alphabet latin

¹ Le présent travail n'aurait pu aboutir sans le concours d'un certain nombre de personnes que je tiens ici à remercier. Mes sincères remerciements vont à Claudia Maria Tresso pour son soutien et encouragements, à Mauro Tosco et à Simone Bettega pour leurs conseils et à tout le personnel des bibliothèques de l'Université de Turin.

² Je suis parlante native du dialecte tunisien. Pour approfondir mes recherches en, je me suis basée sur les travaux et les publications de Baccouche (1972, 2002), Angoujard (1978) et Mion (2004).

“modifié” ? Les mots et les expressions des dialectes tunisiens examinées dans cet article seront transcrites en alphabet latin modifié et traduites en langue française ; dans les cas de phrases et de textes courts on trouvera également la version en caractères arabes.

La société tunisienne est composée de différents groupes ethniques et plusieurs communautés : amazighs, arabes, africains, chinois, juifs et européens de différentes nationalités. Le racisme en tant qu'idéologie discriminatoire fondée sur une typologie de groupes humains n'a que trop marqué l'histoire de l'humanité en général, et cette recherche va montrer que les tunisiens, en se justifiant par des critères biologiques tels que la couleur de la peau, ont “adopté” – ou plus précisément, ont hérité – un lexique tout à fait spécifique pour désigner les personnes à peau noire sans distinction entre les tunisiens et les étrangers, entre musulmans, chrétiens ou juifs, entre arabophones ou non.

Aujourd'hui, en Tunisie, un certain racisme envers les noirs est normalisé. Il fait partie de l'inconscient collectif des tunisiens, de leurs traditions et se manifeste aussi dans leurs comportements linguistiques quotidiens. Les dialectes tunisiens sont chargés de termes stigmatisants. Pour les tunisiens, les personnes noires sont associées au statut d'esclave qui remonte à l'époque de la traite négrière. La distinction entre les “blancs” (*byoḍ* / *bīḍ*,³ ou “libres”, *ḥrār*) et les “noirs” (*kḥaleš*, ou “esclaves/servants”, *‘bīd*, *wešfan*) est toujours utilisée dans le vocabulaire courant. Il s'agit d'une forme de racisme “implicite”, qui n'est ni revendiqué ni explicité, mais qui imprègne le langage et que tout le monde utilise sans y penser, parce qu'on le trouve dans les dictons des grand-mères ou parce qu'il s'agit de mots/expressions courantes dans la langue quotidienne : dans la conversation entre les gens aussi bien que dans les mots des chansons⁴ et même dans les débats politiques.⁵

En Tunisie, il est très difficile de trouver des données concernant la communauté noire. Cela remonte aux premiers jours de la mise en place de l'Etat tunisien moderne par Habib Bourguiba, premier président de la Tunisie, qui cherchait l'homogénéisation raciale, ethnique et culturelle de toute la Tunisie. À l'époque de la construction nationale, Bourguiba, luttait pour l'unification nationale et tenta d'annihiler toute appartenance qui pouvait être réfractaire à l'unité de la nation (tribale, régionale, etc.) “car ne l'oubliez pas”, déclarait Bourguiba en 1974, “l'État tunisien est l'État du peuple

³ Deux versions du même mot : au nord et au centre de la Tunisie le pluriel de *abyaḍ* est *byoḍ*, dans le sud : *bīḍ*.

⁴ Cfr. Infra, Hadi Jouini, *Lāmū-nī illi ghārū min-nī* (chanson de Hedi Jouini).

⁵ Pouessel (2012a: 93) : “... Durant un programme télévisuel autour des élections et de la transition démocratique en Tunisie (chaîne Hannibal, 09 février 2011), le rédacteur en chef du journal *Akhbar al Jomhuriya* a déclaré (en arabe): “J'ai discuté avec des amis un jour et je leur ai dit que j'aurais aimé être un “noir” (oussif). Oui un “noir” (oussif) et aller voter au Sénégal lors de leur premières élections démocratiques dans ce pays il y a une vingtaine d'année (rires des invitées sur le plateau tv), ils sont nos frères les noirs et moi je les aime”.

tout entier, l'État de chaque homme dans la nation" (Mrad-Dali 2015 : 3). Cette politique a continué sous son successeur Ben Ali (Pouessel 2012c : 3). Le recensement de la population en Tunisie ne prévoyant pas de critères de couleur, il est difficile de trouver des données statistiques. Aujourd'hui, on ne trouve que des estimations, mais rien d'officiel.

La communauté noire tunisienne descend des esclaves africains qui étaient amenés et vendus sur les marchés locaux avant même la conquête islamique. La Tunisie, bénéficiant d'une position géographique favorable aux échanges commerciaux, représentait une zone de réception et de transit du trafic des esclaves provenant de l'Afrique Subsaharienne et des différents pays chrétiens de la Méditerranée : la péninsule ibérique, l'Italie et surtout les pays slaves. Les flux étaient divers selon les époques. A cette communauté de noirs tunisiens, s'ajoute les migrants d'origine transafricaine présents en Tunisie depuis quelques décennies (Pouessel 2012b: 133).

Quant à l'appellation des esclaves, la terminologie arabe (pas seulement tunisienne) dépendait de la couleur de leur peau et de leurs origines : ainsi l'esclave noir était appelé *ʿabd*, l'esclave blanc *mamlūk* [appartenant (à son maître)] et l'esclave berbère *akli*, terme attesté en kabyle pour "esclave, noir" et en touareg pour "esclave" (Chaker et Gast 1986 : 423). Les exportations d'esclaves provenant de l'Afrique subsaharienne remontent à la plus haute antiquité, la Carthage punique recevait des esclaves noirs mais pas par voie transsaharienne (Botte 2011: 27), durant la période romaine (146 av. J-C-438), "rien ne permet d'affirmer la présence de ce commerce". Les romains, les vandales et les byzantins n'avaient pas "des moyens pour organiser un commerce à longue distance avec l'Afrique" et à cela s'ajoutent "les relations conflictuelles avec les tribus implantées sur le long des voies de communication" (Botte 2011: 28). Suite à l'expansion arabe et musulmane en Afrique du nord au VII^e siècle, un réseau de routes commerciales et de marchés spécialisés en distributions s'ouvre. Les esclaves noirs subsahariens apparaissent sur les marchés nord-africains à la fin du VII^e siècle (Savage 1992 : 358). Avec la croissance de la demande orientale d'esclaves et la conversion des berbères, il n'est plus possible de les réduire en esclavages, Au début du VIII^e les berbères ibādites instaurent un commerce à longue distance en ouvrant diverses voies caravanières et en contrôlant les terminaux au nord et au sud. Al-Yaʿqūbī (m. 891) est le premier, à la fin du IX^e siècle, à mentionner explicitement des razzias d'esclaves dans le *Bilād as-sūdān*⁶ au départ de Āwdāghust (Cuoq 1975 : 49), dans l'actuelle Mauritanie, aussi bien que la traite des esclaves par les ibādites à partir des oasis du Kawār, dans le nord-est du Niger actuel,

⁶ *Bilād as-sūdān* [le pays des noirs] est le nom donné par les géographes arabes à la région qui s'étend d'ouest en est au sud jusqu'à la partie ouest de l'actuel Soudan. Selon Botte 2011, "le *Bilād as-sūdān* émerge à la connaissance du monde musulman essentiellement pour des raisons commerciales (routes des esclaves, de l'or et d'autres produits)".

précisant que les rois du *Bilād as-sūdān* vendaient des “Sūdāns [des noirs, provenant de *bilād as-sūdan*] (Cuoq 1974 : 49). Al-Istaqhrī (avant 951) signale de même les ventes d’esclaves à Zawīla, une oasis dans le sud-ouest de l’actuel Libye (Cuoq 1974 : 65).

En *Ifriqiyā*,⁷ le premier usage des esclaves subsahariens devait être d’abord leur emploi à la fois comme domestiques et employés dans l’agriculture, plus particulièrement dans le sud-ouest, dans les différentes activités des oasis – entretien des palmiers, irrigation, jardinage. En ce qui concerne l’agriculture, Ibn ʿIdhārī, qui relate des événements datant de 825, rapporte que lors de la révolte du corps militaire sous le troisième souverain aghlabīde, Ziyādat Allāh I, mille noirs furent recrutés dans la région de la Qaṣṭīliyya (actuel Jérid, dans le sud-est de la Tunisie) armés de haches et de pelles (Talbi 1966 : 177). A partir de la première moitié du IXe siècle, les esclaves seront donc aussi employés comme gardes militaires. La majorité des esclaves noirs étaient réduits à l’esclavage lors des guerres locales entre les tribus et les opérations d’enlèvements de la part des commerçants d’esclaves. Quant aux esclaves blancs chrétiens, ils étaient, de leur part, capturés pendant les razzias sur les côtes du nord et de l’est de la Méditerranée, ou bien ils étaient victimes des corsaires et des pirates. Avec la formation de l’empire almoravide au Maghreb (1053–1269), l’Afrique subsaharienne se trouvait connectée au vaste circuit commercial qui reliait tout le monde musulman. L’époque almohade (1147-1269) va être marquée par l’installation par les marchands européens de bases commerciales dans nombreux ports maghrébins introduisant une nouvelle phase de commerce “circumméditerranéen” spécialisé dans le commerce d’esclaves (Botte 2011: 28). Sous les hafsides (1207-1574), qui proclamèrent leurs indépendances de l’empire almohade en 1226, et leurs successeurs les Ottomans (1574-1957) la traite des noirs était active ; un marché spécialisé pour la vente des esclaves (*sūq el-berka*) fit mise en place dans les grandes villes comme Tunis, Kairouan et Mahdia.

Toutes ces données démontrent à quel point la *Ifriqiyā* et toute l’Afrique du nord avaient des relations suivies avec le *Bilād as-sūdān*: jusqu’au début du XIXe siècle les caravanes continuèrent régulièrement à porter de la poudre de l’or, de l’ivoire et surtout des esclaves (Larghèche 1991: 137). La majorité des esclaves provenait du royaume de Kanem-Bornou (qui comprenait des régions qui font aujourd’hui partie du Tchad et du Nigéria) par l’itinéraire le plus actif via le Fezzan (Sud-Ouest de la Libye) et en particulier la ville de Zawīla (Abu Alkhir 2016 : 10). Selon Larghèche “Les routes caravanières aboutissant à Tunis provenaient de plusieurs centres sub-sahariens. En plus de Ghadamès qui reliait la régence au Fezzan, à Morzouk et au royaume de Burnou, Tombouctou était en liaison

7 Le territoire de la région que les anciens arabes appelaient *Ifriqiyā* comprends aujourd’hui la Tunisie, l’Est du Constantinois (Nord-Est de l’Algérie) et la Tripolitaine (Nord-Ouest de la Libye).

régulière avec la régence par la route caravanière qui passait par le Mزاب, le Djerid qui mettait le pays en contact avec les groupes et ethnies africaines d'une large zone touchant le pays Bambara, la ville de Djenné et plusieurs régions du centre-ouest africain. Les noms des esclaves, ou affranchis que nous avons relevés dans les documents d'archives confirment cette origine multiple; à côté des noms fréquents comme Burnoui, Ghdamsi, Ouargli, on rencontre des noms indiquant une origine d'autres centres de l'Afrique de l'Ouest comme Jennaoui ou Tumbouctoui..." (Larghèche 1991: 137).

L'histoire témoigne d'une grande "injustice" envers les esclaves noirs (*ʿabīd*): au contraire des esclaves blancs (*mamlūk*), ils n'avaient aucun espoir d'être rachetés ou rapatriés, ils ne bénéficiaient pas d'une éducation et ils ne pouvaient dans aucun cas améliorer leur situation sociale. Tandis que les mamlūks avaient des fortes chances d'être investis d'une fonction honorifique ou d'avoir un poste important dans l'administration ou même à la cour.⁸ Les esclaves noirs devaient et pouvaient faire seulement des travaux manuels et rudes et le travail domestique, surtout pour les femmes, dans les maisons de riches familles. Ghazali souligne cet aspect : "Cette différence dans la valeur marchande entre les uns et les autres s'explique du fait que le but recherché n'est pas le même : l'esclave noir ne représente qu'une force de travail que l'on espère exploiter à vie, l'esclave blanc est un investissement dont on espère tirer bénéfice au plus vite à travers le rachat. En effet, si l'esclave noir avait peu de chance de recouvrer un jour sa liberté, l'esclave blanc chrétien pouvait espérer sa libération dans des délais plus ou moins brefs. Celle-ci s'effectuait soit, fait rarissime, à titre gracieux, soit par les échanges qui intervenaient parfois entre nation et nation, soit par le rachat, soit par l'intervention du Consul de leur pays d'origine qui devait convaincre le Bey que la prise qui avait fait tomber en esclavage l'un de ses ressortissants était 'illégitime' car contraire aux Traités signés" (Ghazali 2002 : 77-98). L'exemple tunisien, selon Mrad-Dali, "Nous permet de constater que les esclaves, dans une même société, pouvaient avoir des rôles extrêmement différents, voir opposés" (Mrad-Dali 2005 : 937). Selon l'origine et donc la couleur de la peau on était classé: esclave chrétien blanc et esclave noir. Même pour les saints noirs, on remarque l'absence presque totale de documents relatant leurs vies, ce qui amène à poser la question de "l'écrit" et de "l'écriture" non pas comme une performance mais comme une noblesse d'appartenir à une histoire et source d'une allégeance (Dhakliya 1999 : 30). L'hagiographie maghrébine présente les saints esclaves d'une manière générale dans une posture de servants dépendants de leurs maîtres. Les noms de beaucoup de saints esclaves noirs sont effacés de la pratique historiographique.

⁸ Valenci (1967 : 1279) : "Sous le règne de Hammouda Pacha (1782- 1814) les personnages politiques les plus influentes étaient des Mamluks, esclaves blancs, son premier ministre Mustapha Khodja, Youssef Khodja garde des sceaux, Siliman Khaia chargé d'impôts et Marino Stiva, napolitain, secrétaire..."

Le passage du statut d'esclave noir de Bilal ibn Rabāḥ, un des compagnons du Prophète, au rang de *charif* "noble", par sa proximité au Prophète, "reste un modèle unique et irréversible" (Khat 2006 : 115).

L'abolition de l'esclavage en Tunisie a commencé par la libération des esclaves blancs sous la pression des pays européens au début du XIXe siècle. Procédant par étapes, le gouverneur ottoman de Tunis Ahmed I Bey (1805-1855) ferma le marché aux esclaves de Tunis en avril 1841 ; en décembre 1842 annonça que toute personne née dans le pays était désormais considérée comme légalement libre et le 23 janvier 1846 signa le décret établissant l'abolition totale de l'esclavage. La Tunisie est devenue ainsi le premier pays arabe et musulman à abolir l'esclavage. Le 29 mai 1890 un autre décret du gouverneur Ali III Bey (1817-1902) a regroupé tous les textes en relation avec l'esclavage interdisant définitivement l'esclavage. Cependant cette pratique a perduré de manière illégale, en particulier dans le Sud tunisien et dans les milieux agraires, jusqu'au début du XXe siècle. En outre, la situation des esclaves affranchis ne changea pas immédiatement. Plusieurs d'entre eux continuèrent leurs vieilles tâches : surtout les femmes, qui restèrent, par choix ou par contrainte, chez leurs anciens maîtres. Ils passèrent du statut d'esclave (*ʿabd*) à celui d'affranchi (*šūšān* ou *ʿatīq/ʿtīq*). Mrad-Dali évoque des cas où des affranchis ont dû abandonner leurs enfants chez leurs anciens propriétaires faute des moyens pour rembourser les sommes prétendues pour la nourriture depuis leurs naissances : "contrairement à ce que l'on a pu souvent penser, que les décisions politiques et les décrets visant à faire cesser l'esclavage n'impliquaient aucunement une évolution dans le même sens des mentalités et des mœurs" (Mrad-Dali 2005 : 939). Une certaine ambiguïté autour du statut de l'individu noir est apparue; juridiquement ils étaient désormais des hommes libres mais dans la mentalité de l'époque, début XIXe siècles, ils étaient des anciens esclaves ou des affranchis; ils ne sont pas nés libres et ils portèrent les patronymes de leurs anciens propriétaires avec l'indication d'affranchi: *šūšān* ou *ʿtīq*. Cette "confusion" engendrée par l'abolition de l'esclavage autour du statut et l'appellation des noirs n'était pas limitée à la population blanche mais concernait aussi les noirs : "à partir des abolitions jusqu'à aujourd'hui, l'ambiguïté en ce qui concerne l'état de l'individu noir, entre statut d'esclave et statut d'homme libre, s'est perpétuée de manière évidente et notamment dans la façon de (se) nommer et de (s'auto-)désigner. Ainsi, la difficulté à s'adapter aux nouvelles conditions provoquées par les abolitions n'était pas seulement le propre de la population blanche, mais touchait également les anciens esclaves eux-mêmes" (Mrad-Dali 2005 : 939).

Aujourd'hui, en Tunisie, le vocabulaire, surtout celui lié aux noirs, ne semble pas s'être modifié. On trouve plusieurs mots dans les dialectes tunisiens, hérités de cette période où le noir était soumis et le blanc était libre. Dans le sud tunisien, pour distinguer entre une personne blanche et une noire on

appelle le blanc *ḥurr* “libre” ou *abyaḍ* “blanc” et pour les noirs on utilise des mots tels que *ʿabd* “esclave”, *waṣīf* “servant”, *šūšān* “affranchi”, *kaḥlūš* “noiraud”, *xādem* “servant noir, esclave”. La toponymie aussi est marquée par ces expressions et la présence des noirs dans les villes, surtout Tunis, a laissé une trace dans la nomenclature. A Tunis on trouve : Rue des Nègres, Rue des Régresses, Impasse des Esclaves, Impasse du Petit Noir, Impasse el-Guinobi [originaire de la Guinée], Rue du Soudan (Pellegrin 1952 : 77) sans compter les nombreux proverbes tunisiens qui referment des préjugés contre les noirs.⁹

On va donc analyser un certain nombre de mots et d’expressions encore utilisés aujourd’hui pour désigner une personne noire, en examinant l’origine et l’utilisation dans les dialectes tunisiens. Nous nous sommes basés sur la mention de ces expressions dans les dictons, les proverbes et les paroles des chansons tunisiennes. Pour les exemples cités dans cet article, nous nous sommes basés sur la connaissance personnelle et sur les témoignages d’un groupe d’amis et de proches provenant de différentes régions de la Tunisie.

2. L’utilisation des mots liés à la situation de l’esclave : *ʿabd* (pl. *ʿabīd*)

ʿAbd est un substantif arabe formé à partir du verbe *ʿabada* que signifie “vénérer, adorer, honorer”. Le sens général insiste sur la notion de servilité, d’esclavage, mais le sens religieux met en valeur la soumission et l’adoration (de Dieu) (Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, s.v. *ʿbd*). Dans ce dernier sens, le mot *ʿabd* est utilisé dans la composition de plusieurs noms masculins qui sont formés par *ʿabd* “serviteur de” plus un lexème faisant référence à Dieu, pour éviter que Dieu et l’homme ne portent un même nom. Ainsi, si dans la tradition musulmane Dieu est désigné par Allāh, al-Jabbār ou al-Fattāḥ,¹⁰ sa créature doit être désignée distinctement de lui mais en rapport avec lui: *ʿAbd Allāh*, *ʿAbd al-Jabbār*, *ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ*. Presque toujours ce nom est écrit d’un seul bloc et en fonction de la prononciation plutôt que de l’écriture : Abdallah, Abdeljebbar, Abdelfattah. Mais le mot est surtout utilisé pour rendre le sens général d’être humain, personne. En Tunisie, le mot *ʿabd* (pl. *ʿbād*) est utilisé exclusivement dans le sens de “être humain” (Tidjet 2016 : 5), avec exclusion de toute référence au sens étymologique d’esclave. Cependant, comme on va le voir, le pluriel *ʿabīd* est utilisé dans différents dialectes tunisiens pour désigner des personnes de peau noire, et en particulier dans le sud, dans les gouvernorats de Médenine, Gabes, Tataouine, et Tozeur.

⁹ En ce qui concerne l’étude des proverbes tunisiens, je signale les articles de Guiga (1959), Mercier (1937, 1938, 1939) et Quémeneur (1961).

¹⁰ Les dénominations de Dieu dans l’Islam, que l’on appelle *Asmāʾ Allāh al-Ḥusnā* “Les plus Beaux Noms de Dieu” sont 99 et il existe plusieurs listes. Cfr., parmi les autres, Scarabel (1996).

A Sidi Makhoulouf, aux alentours de Médenine, dans le sud-est de la Tunisie, habite la communauté noire appelée *‘Abīd Ghbonten* [Abid Ghbonten, les esclaves de Ghbonten], qui fait partie de la tribu berbère des Ghbonten (ou Egbontenes). La première citation de cette communauté dans les documents, est apparue dans une lettre datée du 27 juillet 1892, reçue par le premier ministre sous le protectorat français Aziz Bouattour (1882-1907). Dans cette lettre, le gouverneur de Arad Youssef Ben Ali annonçait la résignation de Ali Ben Lagha, cheikh des *šawāšīn* Ghbonten, pour des raisons de santé (Scaglioni 2020 : 113). Au début cette communauté était connue et appelée dans les documents par le nom de *šawašīn Ghbonten*, le changement du nom à *‘Abīd Ghbonten* est une imposition extérieure tardive selon Scaglioni (*Ibidem* : 116). Les *‘Abīd Ghbonten* sont connues en Tunisie comme une troupe d’art populaire qui anime les fêtes de mariages dans le sud et les festivals dans toute la Tunisie, et personne ne s’étonne que l’on continue à les appeler “esclaves”.

Dans tous le Maghreb, et en Tunisie en particulier, on utilise beaucoup comme condiment et apéritif une variété très piquante de piment que l’on appelle *felfel barr ‘bīd* “le piment de la terre des esclaves”. Au Maroc cette variété est appelée *sūdāniyya* “soudanaise, du Soudan”, mais les deux expressions coïncident parce-que, comme on l’a vue, le Soudan était la terre d’origine des esclaves noirs (*Bilād as-sūdān*). L’expression *felfel barr ‘bīd* est utilisée partout en Tunisie pour indiquer cette variété de piment.

Dans les dialectes tunisiens en général est souvent utilisée l’expression *rāy ‘abīd* “opinion d’esclaves” pour stigmatiser une opinion non raisonnable ou même stupide.

A Tunis il y a une impasse qui s’appelle *Zanqat al-‘abīd* “Impasse des esclaves”, appellation qui avait été adoptée à l’époque du Protectorat français et qui fait partie de la nomenclature des rues non seulement dans la capitale, mais dans tout le pays.

A Sousse on trouve *Nahj dār el-‘bīd* “Rue de la maison des esclaves” et la tombe d’une sainte noire, Lella Qambra. Et encore, la localité de *Oued el-‘abīd* aux alentours de Takelsa; *Henchir el-‘abīd* situé au Cap-Bon à l’est de Sidi Bouali et *Henchir el-‘abīd* entre Zarzis et Ben Guerdan dans le sud-est.

A Djerba, il y a le *jabbānet el-‘abīd* “le cimetière des esclaves”, où les habitants noirs continuent encore aujourd’hui à enterrer leurs morts, à deux pas se trouvent deux autres cimetières destinés aux *aḥrār* “libres” plus claires de peau.

Finalement, une fête de mariage animée par des musiciens noirs est jusqu’au présent appelée *‘Ers bi-l-‘abīd*, “un mariage avec (animée par) les esclaves”.

3. L'utilisation des mots liés à la situation de l'esclave : *wṣīf* (pl. *wiṣfān*)

Dans tous les dialectes tunisiens, on utilise le mot *wṣīf* (pl. *wiṣfān*), qui provient de l'arabe *waṣīf* qui signifie "servant, domestique", mais qui est utilisé pour désigner une personne de peau noire.

A Tunis il y a une rue qui s'appelle *Nahj al-waṣfān* et son nom a été traduit en français comme "Rue des nègres" (et non "Rue des servants").¹¹

Idhā ṣabbaḥt 'la wṣīf arja' urqud xīr "Si tu rencontres un noir le matin (et tu lui dit bonjour) mieux sera de revenir à dormir" est un dicton, très populaire en Tunisie, qui conseille à ceux qui commencent la journée en rencontrant une personne noire de rentrer chez eux et de se rendormir. Dans ce cas, la peau noire est considérée comme porte malheur pour toute la journée. Il est intéressant de noter que dans la région de Zarzis, dans le sud tunisien, c'est la rencontre ou juste le croisement de la femme noire le matin qui porte malheur, au contraire de l'homme, qui porterait bonheur.

4. L'utilisation des mots liés à la situation d'une esclave : *xādim* (pl. *xdam*)

Le participe actif, substantivé, *xādim* est dérivé du verbe *xadama* qui signifie "travailler (pour quelqu'un)". En Mauritanie et au Moyen Orient c'est terme très discriminatoire : *xādim* se dit de quelqu'un qui est au service des autres et le verbe même, *xadama*, a une connotation négative et péjorative, puisqu'il est considéré comme une insulte ou une injure.¹²

Dans les dialectes maghrébins, le même verbe (*xdam*) signifie "travailler" et à partir de ce verbe, on forme deux noms avec des significations différentes : *xaddām/xaddāma* signifie "travailleur, travailleuse" et *xiddīm/xiddīma* (ou *xdim*) signifie "servant, servante". Il existe aussi le mot *xādem*, qui est un substantif féminin non caractérisé morphologiquement utilisé dans le sud tunisien pour désigner une femme noire "non libre" [*mūš ḥurra*], donc une servante ou esclave.

On trouve ce mot *xādem* "servante noire" dans une fameuse chanson tunisienne chanté par Hedi Jouini et écrite en 1955, qui raconte l'histoire d'un homme amoureux d'une servante noire.

¹¹ Foto disponible sur : <https://orientxxi.info/magazine/negrophobie-les-damnes-du-maghreb,4046>.

¹² Au même temps, le terme *xādim* (masculin) peut avoir une connotation positive et honorifique s'il est employé dans le sens de "serviteur de la patrie" (quelqu'un qui a servi dans l'armée), ou "serviteur de la mosquée" (quelqu'un qui s'occupe de la mosquée, ou encore "serviteur des parents", qui est un devoir religieux sacré chez les musulmans. Sans oublier que les rois saoudiens portent jusqu'au présent, et fièrement, le titre de *xādim al-Ḥaramayn aš-šarifayn* "serviteur de deux lieux saints" (La Mecque et Médine).

لاموني إلي غارو مني
قالولي اش عجبك فيها
قالولي علاش تعشق خادم
قتلتهم يزري مالدوة
سمرا و نبيع عليها العالم
والعالم كلو شاهيها
و نبيع عليها العالم

*lāmū-nī illi gārū min-ni
qālū-l-i waš ʿajbe-k fi-hā
qalū-l-i ʿlāš tiʿšeq xādem
qolt-el-hom yezzi mi-d-duwa
samrā we nbīʿ ʿli-ha il-ʿālem
we-l-ʿālem kullū šāhī-hā
we nbīʿ ʿli-ha il-ʿālem*

Ils m’ont blâmé, ceux qui sont jaloux de moi
Me disant : que te plait-il chez elle
Ils m’ont dit pourquoi tu es amoureux d’une servante noire
J’ai leur ai dit d’arrêter,
Brunette et je vendrais le monde pour elle
Et le monde entier la désire
Je vendrais le monde entier pour elle

Le mot *xādem* est aussi utilisé dans un vieux conte populaire d’origine algérienne très connu en Tunisie, *Wadʿa we xhwāt-hā es-sabʿa* “Wadʿa et ses sept frères”. Voici, à titre d’illustration, un extrait: il s’agit d’une plainte où la jeune victime (blanche) exprime sa détresse pour le changement de rôles entre elle et son [esclave] noire.

يا جمال با و ما
لا تاكلو لا تشربو
الخادم ولات حرة
والحرة ولات خادم

*yā jmāl bā we mā
lā taklū lā tušarbū
l-xādem wallāt ḥurra
we-l-ḥurra wallāt xādem*

O chameaux de mes père et mère
 Ne mangez pas, ne buvez pas
 L’esclave est devenue libre
 Et la femme libre est devenue esclave

5. L’utilisation des mots liés à la situation de l’esclave affranchi : *šūšān* (pl. *šawāšīn*)

Le terme *šūšān* fait référence aux affranchis et à leurs descendants. Selon Evans-Pritchard, les *šūšāns* sont les descendants des unions entre hommes arabes et femmes noires (Evans-Pritchard 1963 : 42). L’appellatif *šūšān* se trouve dans plusieurs patronymes tunisiens. L’origine de ce mot n’est pas claire et il semble n’avoir rien à voir avec la racine arabe *šwš* qui signifie “faire du bruit” et “confondre” (Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, s.v. *šwš*), mais il est utilisé dans le sens de “affranchi” et parfois aussi de “esclave”. Selon Bédoucha, dans le sud-ouest de la Tunisie certains groupes de *aḥrār* [libres] peuvent devenir des *šūšān* par métissage ou par appauvrissement (Bédoucha 1984 : 88).

Sidi Sa^cd aš-šūšān est le nom d’un saint noir. Sa tombe se trouve à Mornag, à quelques kilomètres de Tunis. On raconte qu’il était le “gardien d’un domaine dans les plaines de Mornag, [et qu’il était] connu par ses petits miracles. On raconte qu’il voulut un jour prendre l’araire or voici que l’araire se mit à bouger spontanément, et qu’il faisait aussi mourir étouffés les voleurs de bétail” (Valenci 1967 : 1279). Sidi Sa^cd aš-šūšān est vénéré par la communauté noire tunisienne et une fête des Stambeli¹³ à lui dédiée est célébrée chaque automne (Larghèche 1991 : 147).

Dans le texte d’une chanson de la région du Gafsa (sud-ouest tunisien), le maître s’adresse à son *šūšān* en lui demandant de conduire doucement le chameau de son épouse.¹⁴

سوق وربص ياساعد ياشوشان
 سوق وربص و ساعد جمال للاك حتى تلبس يا ساعد ياشوشان
 سوق وهني وساييس جمال للاك وحتى تحني يا ساعد يا شوشان
 سوق الجحفه يا ساعد يا شوشان

Sūq we rabbeṣ yā sa^cd yā šūšān
Sūq we rabbeṣ yā sa^cd yā šūšān we sā^cid jmal lallā-k ḥatta tilbes

¹³ Le Stambeli est un rite de possession musico-thérapeutique par la transe implanté en Tunisie par des populations d’origine subsaharienne au temps de l’esclavage. C’est un témoignage vivant de l’héritage africain de la Tunisie. Sur ce rite cfr. Jankowsky (2010).

¹⁴ Chanson reprise et chantée par Nabihā Karaouli (<https://youtu.be/M6Q4qhH0t0Q>).

Sūq we hannī we sayes jmāl lallā-k we ḥatta ṭḥanni yā sa^cd yā šūšān

Suq ej-jehfa ya sa^cd yā šūšān

Conduis (le chameau) doucement o sa^cd o šūšān

Conduis doucement et attend sa beauté ta maitresse qu'elle s'habille

Conduis et prends soin de sa beauté ta maitresse pour qu'elle met son henné

Conduis le cortège o sa^cd o šūšān

6. L'utilisation des mots liés à la situation de l'esclave affranchi : *ṭīq/ṭāṭīq* (pl. *m^cāṭīq*)

Le mot *ṭīq/ṭāṭīq* provient de la racine arabe *ṭq* qui a le sens de “conserver, préserver, être vieux, et vieillir”, mais signifie aussi “affranchir (un esclave), lui donner la liberté” (Dallet 1982 : 1006. Cfr. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, s.v. *ṭq*).

Utilisé comme patronyme pour les descendants des noirs affranchis, en Tunisie, plusieurs familles noires portent des noms qui font références aux maitres de leurs ancêtres. A Djerba, par exemple, on trouve comme prénom *ṭAtīq* de X ou *ṭAtīq* de Y : Affranchi de la famille X ou de la famille Y. Aujourd'hui plusieurs citoyens veulent changer ce patronyme. En Octobre 2020, le Tribunal de première instance de Médenine a accepté la demande d'un citoyen âgé de 81 ans, de retirer les noms *ṭAtīq* et *ṭTīq* de ses documents – aussi bien que des documents de tous le membres de sa famille.¹⁵

7. L'utilisation des mots liés à la couleur de la peau : *kaḥlūš* (pl. *kaḥāliš*)

Le mot *kaḥlūš* signifie “noiraud” et a une origine hybride arabe-berbère. Dans le Dictionnaire kabyle-français on trouve l'adjectif *akehluc* qui signifie “brunet, jeune personne brune, au teint foncé” (Dallet 1982 : 400). En arabe maghrébin le mot *kḥel*, qui vient de l'arabe *kuḥl* “antimoine ; couleur de l'antimoine” est utilisé pour désigner la couleur bleue très foncé, presque noir et, par métonymie, les personnes de peau noire. En arabe classique ce mot renvoi aussi aux noirceurs des yeux (Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, s.v. *kḥl*). Le morphème suffixe *š* est utilisé en Tunisie et en Algérie et appliqué aux noms de personnes, où il prend la valeur d'hypocoristique. Pour les prénoms masculins, en Algérie surtout, de la même manière que pour Alloua on a le diminutif Allouaš et pour Hani on a Hannouš/Hanouš, on

¹⁵ Monsieur Ḥamdān Dālī, était Ḥamdān Atīq Dālī. La nouvelle a été publiée sur plusieurs quotidiens tunisiens et étrangers : cfr. par exemple Le Monde (https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2020/10/23/en-tunisie-une-famille-autorisee-a-changer-de-nom-pour-ne-plus-subir-de-discriminations_6057176_3212.html),

utilise *kaḥlūš* comme diminutif de *kḥel*. En Tunisie le mot *kaḥlūš/kahlūša* correspond à “noiraud, noiraude”, mais avec une portée péjorative qui le rend souvent un synonyme de “nègre”.

8. Conclusions

L’esclavage, comme la traite des esclaves, a été une pratique soutenue, codifiée, instituée par les États. Puis, à partir de la fin du XVIII^e siècle, avec le développement d’une internationale abolitionniste transatlantique et les luttes des esclaves eux-mêmes, elle a été encadrée, réglementée, pour être progressivement et officiellement abolie. Enfin, l’esclavage a fait l’objet d’interdits internationaux, de sanctions pénales internes et apparemment d’une réprobation morale universelle. Or, si l’esclavage dans sa version d’antan a été abolie partout en tant que forme de travail autorisé par la loi, de même que le statut juridique d’esclave a disparu des législations en vigueur, les séquelles sont loin d’avoir été complètement éliminés et ils imprègnent le langage quotidien. L’exemple des dialectes tunisiens est loin d’être l’unique, non seulement parmi les autres dialectes arabes,¹⁶ mais aussi parmi plusieurs langues vivantes. On ne peut pas affirmer aujourd’hui que le tunisien est raciste : simplement il utilise des mots et des expressions qui font partie de son dialecte, il est habitué à les utiliser et il ne cherche pas des mots alternatifs. La Tunisie s’est dotée en 2018 d’une loi relative à l’élimination de toute forme de discrimination raciale : la loi organique n° 50-2018. Une grande première dans la région et pour le pays qui ne disposait jusqu’ici d’un cadre juridique sur la question, avec la diffusion d’internet et l’utilisation massive des réseaux sociaux une certaine conscience contre le phénomène du racisme verbale est en train de se développer dans tout le monde arabe.

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¹⁶ Pour l’exemple des *ḥarrāthīn*, cfr. Gast (2000 : 3414-3420).

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Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s “Prayer of Damascus:”

A window on to Damascus in the hell of the Black Death¹

(Part 1)²

Claudia Maria Tresso

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s famous *Rihla* [(Chronicle of) *Travels*] is probably the only work of medieval travel literature whose protagonist claims to have personally witnessed the plague pandemic known as the Black Death, which ravaged the Mediterranean world between 1347 and 1350 (and continued in subsequent waves). The passages describing the scourge include the story of a rogatory – and inter-religious prayer held in Damascus in July 1348. This is probably the most often mentioned passage of the *Rihla*, the most quoted in the studies on the Black Death in the Middle East, as well in those on relations between religious groups in the Mamluk empire. Nevertheless, to this day it has not yet been the subject of in-depth analysis. This article is an endeavour to contribute to both the studies on Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s *Rihla* and the Black Death by analysing the story of the Damascus prayer in its historical context and literary aspects, i.e., by answering the questions: how does the story fit into the climate of the pandemic in general and into Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s *Rihla* in particular? What are its lexical and narrative characteristics? Moving from the story to the narrated event leads to the question on relations between the different religious groups that took part in the rite. Moreover, how did Islamic scholars interpret the prayer gathering? Since the *Rihla* is not a chronicle but a narrative work, another question arises: to what extent is its information reliable? The answer will be found by comparing it with the main Middle Eastern Arabic sources of the 14th and 15th centuries, which are mostly Chronicle texts. The concluding paragraph investigates whether the story of the Damascus prayer derives from Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s personal testimony, as he claims in the *Rihla*, or whether he (or the editor of the work, Ibn Juzayy) might have taken the information from other sources.

¹ For their generous and authoritative comments I would like to thank the first readers of this article, Michelguglielmo Torri and Luca Badini Confalonieri, and all those who have given me useful advice and information for my research: in particular Abdelouadoud el-Omrani, Abdulaziz al-Musallam, Adel Jabbar, Anna Unali, Ermis Segatti, Ignazio De Francesco, Joan Rundo, Luca Patrizi, Maria Prisley, Narcyz Klimas, Rosanna Nardi, Samia Ben Amor, Yosef Koby and the anonymous reviewers who gave me valuable suggestions to improve my work.

² Part 2 will be published in *Kervan* 25/2.

Keywords: Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, Ibn Juzayy, Arabic Travel Literature, Epidemics, Black Death in the Middle East, Medieval Pandemic, *Dhimmī* in the Mamluk Sultanate, Medieval Arabic Chronicles.

*Wa-khaffafa Allāhu Taʿālā ʿanhum*³

1. Introduction⁴

In Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s *Riḥla* [(Chronicle of) *Travels*],⁵ there are twelve allusions to the Black Death on nine separate occasions: most are short references about the number of victims and some personal notes, but there is a particular passage worthy of mention. Under the arrows of the plague, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (henceforth: IB) tells one of the most beautiful and moving stories in his work, describing a rogatory – and inter-religious – prayer gathering held in Damascus in July 1348, just before the number of victims reached its peak. Even though this story is often quoted in its entirety in numerous anthologies and essays,⁶ it has not yet been studied in terms of its literary aspects and its constellation of religious, cultural and historical references which were well known both to the author of the work and his audience, made up of a small circle of 14th -15th century enlightened citizens (including some women), most of them Muslim Arabs. These cosmopolitan and highly cultured people would exchange ideas and attend, or even take part in the many debates that an epochal event like the Black Death necessarily raised. They were able to read the story by IB understanding its meaning on several levels as well as its narrative style, which is a feat mostly impossible for readers – even Arab readers – today. This article aims to fill this gap by first analysing the literary aspects of the story: the words, the style, and the

³ “And God Most High lightened their affliction” (from the *Riḥla* of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, al-Tāzī 1997, vol. 1: 325-326; Gibb 1958, vol. 1: 143-144 [EP 228-229]).

⁴ For transliteration from Arabic, a simplified system has been chosen which favours the diagrams rather than diacritical signs, so that *t* = *th*, *h* = *kh*, *ḍ* = *dh*, *š* = *sh* and *ǧ* = *gh*. The letter *ǧīm* is transcribed *j*, while *ʿayn* is written with an apostrophe open to the right [ʿ] and *hamza* to the left [ʾ] – but the latter is not recorded at the beginning of the word. The *tāʾ marbūṭa* is transcribed with *t* if the word is the first term in an *iḍāfa* (construct state), but it is not if the word is in pausal form.

⁵ As we will see later, we do not know exactly how the protagonist and narrator of the *Riḥla* (Ibn Baṭṭūṭa) and its editor (Ibn Juzayy) collaborated on the work, but as the travelogue is known as ‘the *Riḥla* of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa,’ in this article I will use “Ibn Baṭṭūṭa” [henceforth IB] to indicate both the traveller protagonist of the work and its author(s).

⁶ See, among others, Sticker (1908, 1: 46), Dols (1974b: 280), Melhaoui (1997: 111-112), Congourdeau and Melhaoui (2001: 121-122), Jacquart (2006: 237-238), Rosenwein (2010: 484), Borsch and Sabraa (2017: 84-85), Fiorentini (2020: 57), Mirza (2020a; 2020b).

narrator's ability to communicate with his audience and arouse their emotions. Then, two questions that have not yet been investigated will be answered: is the information in the text (i.e., the rite itself and the number of victims of the pandemic in Damascus and Cairo) true? And was IB really an eyewitness of this event, as he claims in the *Rihla*?

In order to highlight the multifaceted interest of the story, the article is divided into two parts (one on the narration and one on the event) and 11 Sections.

In the first part the outbreak of the great pandemic takes into account the studies that have been made (and those still to be made) on its arrival in the Mediterranean basin, focusing on the Arab area and in particular the Mamluk empire. This is where the Damascus prayer gathering took place and it is the area for which most sources and opportunities for further research exist (Section 2). The attention then shifts to IB's *Rihla*, especially to the final part when the pandemic is mentioned (Section 3). The historical/literary introduction to the story (Section 4) concludes with the Arabic text of the *Editio Princeps* by Defremery and Sanguinetti and its English translation by Hamilton Gibb (and Charles Beckingham) (Section 5).⁷ Both the analysis of the narration and that of the lexicon (Section 6) confirm that the piece is one of the most admirable in the *Rihla*: each element has a strong emotional influence on the reader and the story proves to be a true gem of medieval Arabic literature.

In the second part, the analysis moves from the formal aspect to the content, i.e. from the narration to the event. After a concise analysis of relations between the different religious groups during the Pandemic, both in the Mamluk Muslim area and in European Christian countries (Section 7), an examination of the main medieval Middle Eastern sources (mostly texts of Chronicles) gives credence as to why some Muslim scholars describe this event as a “memorable” one (Section 8). Those same sources and others also make it possible to verify the reliability of the information related in the story (Section 9) and to place the prayer gathering of Damascus within a set of similar rites that took place not just in Damascus but also in Cairo: a city which, as IB reports, was far more devastated than Damascus by the pandemic (Section 10). The article concludes by proposing a reading of the story that takes into account the debate – which has always existed and is now more heated than ever – on the credibility of IB as a reliable witness to many of the events described in the *Rihla* (Section 11). Many

⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, the passages from the work of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa quoted in this article are taken from the Arabic version edited by al-Tāzī (1997; from now on, in the notes, al-Tāzī), and from the English translation by Gibb and Beckingham (1958-2000) – from now on, in the notes, Gibb (vol. I-III) and Gibb and Beckingham (vol. IV). Both these editions follow the 1853-1858 Defremery and Sanguinetti *Editio Princeps* [EP], respect its division of the text into four volumes (plus one volume of indexes) and show the corresponding page number of this *Editio* in the margin, which in the notes of this article is quoted in square brackets.

questions have been raised as to whether IB really was an eyewitness to them and we will see that scholars have demonstrated a series of borrowings and adaptations from other sources. With regard to this episode too, an attempt will be made to answer the question of whether IB reports, as he claims, his own testimony of this event, or whether he and/or the editor of the *Rihla*, Ibn Juzayy, could have borrowed the story of the prayer gathering from other sources.

Whether or not IB was in Damascus on that day, this article intends to show that this story is worthy of interest both for its pleasing form and its many cultural, religious and social references, which make it a window on to Damascus trapped in the hell of the Black Death.

2. The Great Plague: the genesis of the “Black Death”

The subject of epidemics suddenly gained prominence at the beginning of 2020, when Europe recorded its first cases of COVID-19, a highly infectious respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.⁸ The epidemic, according to current information, originated between summer and winter 2019 in central China in Wuhan, the capital of the province of Hubei. It spread with incredible speed to all continents, so much so that on 11 March 2020 it was described by the World Health Organization as a “pandemic.”⁹ To date, the disease continues to devastate those countries most affected by a growing number of infections and deaths.

From the very beginning, much has been said about the rapidity of the virus propagation, underlining the correlation between this and the prevailing increase in interconnection between the different countries of our planet. As is well known, however, interrelations between peoples are not a characteristic of our times, but have been a constant in the history of the world since ancient times. Civilizations have evolved in this way, precisely, through the continuous circulation of people, goods, customs, experiences and information, including health, which in turn has given rise to an infinite series of phenomena of contamination and reciprocal contagion.¹⁰

⁸ The name SARS-CoV-2 was assigned to this new type of coronavirus (literally “crown-shaped virus”) on 11 February 2020 by the World Health Organization. COVID-19 is instead the name of the respiratory disease caused by this virus and is formed by the acronym, based on the English language, of Co (Corona), Vi (Virus) and D (Disease), i.e., “Coronavirus Disease”, followed by the number “19” which indicates the year of identification of the virus.

⁹ The spread of COVID-19 was declared a “pandemic” when the disease had already affected 114 countries, infecting over 118,000 people and causing over 4,000 deaths. See “Q&A on coronaviruses (COVID-19)”, in *Who.int, World Health Organization* (accessed March 11, 2020).

¹⁰ This is, in short, the starting point of the field of studies known as *World History*, which in contemporary times counts among its most important exponents authors such as Spengler (1918-1922), Toynbee (1934-1961), Quigley (1961), McNeill (1963), Mann (1986-2012), Abu-Lughod (1989), Bulliet (1994), Manning (2003), Bayly (2004), Marks (2007), Dunn and Mitchell (2000)

In short, humanity has always exchanged among other things, viruses and bacilli, capable of causing deadly epidemics. The worst of these epidemic diseases, as far as we know, is the plague. Among the many plague pandemics to have occurred in history, the most virulent and destructive one which upset the demographic and economic balance in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, is surely the one which, much later than its onset, was to become known as the “Black Death.”¹¹

After it appeared around 1330 in an unspecified area of the Mongolian steppe in Central Asia,¹² where it was endemic among the rodent population,¹³ it is likely that the epidemic then spread along the caravan routes known as the “Silk Road” in the period of the commonly referred to as *Mongolian pax*, which facilitated the connections between the four khanates dominating Eurasia from west to east, from the Black Sea to the Yellow Sea.¹⁴ Following these routes, the plague probably soon crossed the Gobi desert, passing north of the Caspian Sea and, skirting the course of the Volga and the shores of the Sea of Azov, it reached the Crimean peninsula and arrived in Caffa (today’s Feodosia), as attested,

and Fauvelle-Aymar (2013). With reference to the Islamic area, see Hodgson (1974) and Voll (1994), and specifically for Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s Travels see Dunn (1986) which is quoted several times in this article.

¹¹ The expression “Black Death” (for which see below), which was not in use in either European or Middle Eastern sources at the time of the pandemic, is now being criticised by some for its anachronism (e.g., Lindemann 2006: 600), but it is used in this article to point out unambiguously the great wave of plague that devastated the Middle East, North Africa and Europe in 1347-1350.

¹² On the place of origin of the Black Death there is an unresolved controversy, for which see Varlik (2015: 94-96, “Controversy over the Origins of the ‘Oriental Plague’”). This is probably the area stretching from the north-western shores of the Caspian Sea to southern Russia (where a plague epidemic is attested in 1346-1347). See Norris (1977: 1 and *passim*, who extends the area southwards to Iraq); Dols (1979: 170-171, esp. note 17); Benedictow (2004: 35-36, “The territorial origin of plague and of the Black Death”); Borsch (2014: 5-6 and *passim*).

¹³ It is only at the end of the 19th century, after identifying the plague bacillus (*Yersinia pestis*), that scientists discovered that the best vehicle for transmitting the plague to man is a type of flea called *Xenopsylla cheopis*, which coexists with infected rats. The discovery, which occurred in 1898, was made by the French doctor and biologist Paul-Louis Simond and confirmed by the observations of the Japanese doctor Ogata Masanori. For the history of these discoveries, the scepticism with which they were received and the discussions that followed, see Carmichael (2009: 70-71).

¹⁴ For the tortuous – and difficult to reconstruct – path of the Black Death, which probably did not follow a single route but expanded in different directions both by sea and by land, and for the subsequent waves of the pandemic, see Dols (1977: 35-67) and Varlik (2015, esp. 97-107, “The Initial Spread of the Black Death”). For the influence of the Mongolian Empire on the world’s ecological and epidemiological balances and its effect on changing disease balances, see McNeill (1976: 141-184). The same author supports the hypothesis that the bacillus of the Black Death would have reached Central Asia through the Mongols, whose “movements across previously isolating distances in all probability brought the bacillus *Yersinia pestis* to the rodents of the Eurasian steppe for the first time” (McNeill 1976: 143). Norris (1977: 11-13) disputes that the plague originated in Central Asia, and according to some Byzantine sources contemporary to the Black Death, proposes that the epidemic originated in southern Russia and then spread from there to the north passing from one family of rodents to another, reaching European Russia – from where it would later arrive in Europe and Middle East.

in 1346.¹⁵ Regarding the spread of the Black Death in India and China, which is also attested in some Arabic sources,¹⁶ the hypothesis has been strongly questioned, or even excluded.¹⁷

In the port of Caffa, at the time a colony of the Republic of Genoa, there were hundreds of commercial ships,¹⁸ all destined for the main Mediterranean ports; the bacillus was given an excellent means of transport. In a flash, the plague erupted into the Mediterranean devastating in the North the whole of Europe (where it reached Greenland), in the South, Egypt, the Maghreb and Central Africa, and in the East the Near and Middle East¹⁹ (but it probably also arrived in Iraq and Syria from Tabriz).²⁰ Within three years the pandemic caused unprecedented devastation and, according to the most reliable estimates, it killed at least one third of the population of the Mediterranean.²¹ It returned

¹⁵ It is interesting to note the story that the plague may have arrived in Caffa with what is referred to as “the first biological war” of mankind: in 1346, in fact, the Khan of the Golden Horde besieged the city, but was soon forced to retreat because the plague had struck his army and men died by the dozens. According to Gabriele de Mussis’s report, before leaving the Khan would have given orders to catapult a large number of infected corpses inside the walls: certainly, without imagining that he would have caused a series of contagions that would have brought the plague to all the Mediterranean countries (Wheelis 2002; Benedictow 2004: 51-53; Varlik 2015: 99-100).

¹⁶ See among others al-Maqrīzī (1971, vol. 4: 81-82; cf. Ibn Taghrī Birdī 1979, vol. 10: 197, who quotes him); Ibn al-Wardī (1997, vol. 2: 339).

¹⁷ See among others Biraben (1975: 49-50); Dols (1977: 38-43); Norris (1977: 3-6); Benedictow (2004: 40-4), who says that in the second millennium CE neither China nor India seem to have been affected by the plague until the 17th century. The most recent and radical criticism of the presence of the Black Death in India and China is due to Sussman (2011).

¹⁸ IB also reports the Genoese presence in Caffa and the many ships moored in its port. He claims having spent a couple of days there in 1332 and describes it as “a great city along the sea coast inhabited by Christians, most of them Genoese”, in whose port he counted “about two hundred vessels, both ships of war and trading vessels, small and large, for it is one of the world’s celebrated ports”. (al-Tāzī II: 216-217; Gibb II: 470-471 [EP 357-358]).

¹⁹ For the arrival of the plague in the Arab area (first of all in the Egyptian port of Alexandria, where it probably appeared in the early autumn 1347) see, among others, Shrewsbury (1970: 151); Ashtor (1976: 301-302); Dols (1977: 59-60); Benedictow (2004: 62-63); Borsch and Sabraa (2017: 68-70). In Europe too, the plague arrived by sea: first of all in Italy, where it appeared in the port of Messina in September 1347. In November of the same year the plague arrived in France, where it landed at the port of Marseille. In the first months of 1348 it arrived in the Balearic Islands and from there reached Spain in May, hitting Barcelona and Valencia first. Then, from the coastal areas it penetrated the continent and burst into France, Spain, England, Switzerland, Germany, Flanders, Poland, Russia and Scandinavia (Biraben 1975: 74-81; Brossollet 1984: 54; Cosmacini 2006: 30-31).

²⁰ The plague probably arrived in Iraq from the Caucasus at the end of 1347 (Benedictow 2004: 64-65; Varlik 2015: 102-103).

²¹ According to the most recent studies, in Europe the Black Death killed an average of 70-80% of those who fell ill (Aberth 2011: 59). Historians of the time say – and subsequent studies mostly confirm – that more than a third of the inhabitants died in the affected areas, that is at least 20 million people, with many more victims in urban than in rural areas (cf. the detailed analysis of Biraben 1975: 176-184 and Benedictow 2004: 245-386, “Mortality in the Black Death”). See also, among others, Onion (1980: 131); Brossollet (1984: 53); Cosmacini (2006: 20). In order to realise the impact that the Black Death had on European demography, consider that the approximately 60 million victims of World War II, including those of the Holocausts, made up 5% of the population (Bergdolt 1994: 6-7). With respect to the Middle East, the most recent studies estimate that the Black Death killed 42% of the population (Borsch and Sabraa 2017: 84, see also Borsch 2014). It should be noted that the only surveys

periodically, though with less virulence, in a series of waves which persisted for about a century and a half, and remained in Europe until the 17th century and in Egypt until the middle of the 19th century.²²

Only long afterwards, as already mentioned, was this pandemic called the Black Death (or Black Plague) in several languages, including Arabic (*al-mawt/al-ṭāʿūn al-aswad*).²³ This is an expression of uncertain origin, which does not appear in the texts of contemporary chroniclers and probably dates back to Latin, since from the first century BCE authors such as Tibullus and Horace had used the expression *Atra Mors* [Black Death]²⁴ to designate serious pandemics.²⁵ The Latin expression is however used in the 12th century by the French physician Gilles de Corbeil, in reference to a *febris pestilentialis* [pestilential fever]²⁶ and much later, in the Scandinavian and German region, it was to be used with

previously carried out on the subject were those of Dols (1977: 193-223), which estimated a number of victims ranging from one third to half of the population. On the pathogenesis of *Yersinia pestis*, its exceptional virulence and its ability to subvert the human immune system, see among others Demeure *et al.* (2019: 361-363).

²² In Europe, where successive waves were less frequent and less devastating than in the Middle East, the demographic decline caused by the disease came to an end in the mid-15th century (Shoshan 1981: 387) – but recent genetic analyses have shown that the bacillus that caused the Black Death was present at least until the 17th century (Seifert *et al.* 2016) and plague epidemics are however attested until the end of the 19th (Biraben 1975: 118-129, 184-190 and 375-449 [appendix 4]). In the Middle East, however, the successive waves were so violent and so numerous that their cumulative effect was a higher number of deaths than in the three years of the Black Death (Dols 1977: 4). For the plague waves in the Middle East see Dols (1977: 193-235 and 305-314) and Dols (1981), dedicated to this topic. On the depopulation of the Middle East, and of Egypt in particular, see Ayalon (1985); Borsch (2014); Varlik (2015: 118-125). It has to be considered that depopulation was not only due to the plague, but also to a whole series of serious problems derived from the economy, such as the sudden collapse of wheat exports which caused a very serious impoverishment of the countryside, with the consequent tendency to migrate towards urban areas and the considerable decrease of marriages (and therefore births), see Dols (1977: 231-235). In Egypt, the last significant wave was recorded in Alexandria in 1835 and the end of the plague was certainly favoured by the end of the Mamluk dominion (which after the advent of the Ottomans was no longer formal but still substantial), overthrown by Napoleon in 1798. In fact, it severed Egypt's links with the areas of Central Asia from which the Mamluks – and the bacilli – came (McNeill 1976: 175-176 and 301-302, note 68; Shoshan 1981: 387; Borsch and Sabraa 2017: 63-64). In Europe, too, it has recently been shown that the bacilli of the subsequent waves following the Black Death did not come from permanent reservoirs formed as a result of the pandemic, but arrived in European ports from Asia at intervals of 15 years (Schmid *et al.* 2015).

²³ From a search on the Google search engine conducted on 01.03.2021, there were about 455,000 results for the Arabic expression *al-mawt al-aswad* “the Black Death”, while for *al-ṭāʿūn al-aswad* “the Black Plague” there were 81,000, followed by *al-ṭāʿūn al-ʿaẓīm* “the Enormous Plague, 13,900”. In English, *the Black Death* (6,240,000) is undoubtedly more widely used than *the Black Plague* (2,070,000) – not to mention other expressions, such as *the Pestilence* or *the Great Mortality*.

²⁴ The adjective *āter* (fem. *atra*), which is synonymous with *niger* “black” but more than that it recalls an idea of terror, misfortune and death, is often used by Lucretius, Virgil and Seneca in the description of various epidemic diseases (Calonghi 1969: 282b; Ernout and Meillet 2001 [1932]: 53b-54a). For a more detailed analysis and citations of the sources, see D'Irsay (1926, esp. 331-332).

²⁵ In the 11th century, the Andalusian polymath Ibn Sīnā [Avicenna] also uses the adjective *aswad* [black] to indicate the worst kind of plague [ṭāʿūn] “that nobody survives” [*lā yaflitu minhu aḥad*] (Ibn Sīnā 1999, vol. 3: 165).

²⁶ De Corbeil (1907), quoted in D'Irsay (1926: 328-329).

specific reference to the great medieval plague pandemic. From this area it was to gradually enter other European languages as a calque: *Svarti Dauði* in Icelandic, *Sorte Dod* in Danish and *Schwarzer Tod* in German. The first occurrence in English [*Black Death*] seems to be from 1755.²⁷ According to some, the spread of this expression was also due to the harmful prognosis of the disease (D’Irsay 1926: 329) and the fact that, at an advanced stage, large dark spots of a haemorrhagic nature could appear under the skin (Hecker 1846: 2; Conrad 1982: 294).

Even today, scholars of various disciplines continue to study the plague, the Black Death in particular,²⁸ focusing on its various aspects not only in Europe but also in the Middle East, to which this article refers.²⁹ The aim of this paper is to contribute to these studies by examining the story of an event that occurred in Damascus in July 1348, as discovered in one of the most famous travelogues in history. It was recounted by the Moroccan Muḥammad Ibn Baṭṭūṭa and edited by the Andalusian Ibn Juzayy al-Kalbī, but is known in both Arabic and English as *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, *The Riḥla [Travels] of IB*.³⁰ From a literary point of view, the story of this event is among the most remarkable of the work, and the presence of contemporary Arabic sources makes it possible to establish the reliability of the events it reports and place it in the context of the most deadly pandemic to have ever occurred in the Middle East.

²⁷ On this date, the expression is attested in a text translated from Danish by Andreas Berthelson (see *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v., where the expression is said to have been “modelled on a Danish lexical item”).

²⁸ “Black Death Studies is in excellent health”, as Stearns wrote just over ten years ago, suggesting that the considerable interest in these studies was partly due to the epidemics that had struck the planet in the previous 30 years: AIDS, Ebola, Avian Influenza and Swine Influenza (Stearns 2009: 1). Since then, many other studies and research related to the Black Death have been conducted in various fields of science and history – and in the ensuing 11 years humanity has had to deal with three other major epidemics: SARS (2003), MERS (2012) and COVID-19 (2020). For an idea of the number of existing studies on the Black Death, the bibliography in one of the most important texts on the subject, by Jean-Noel Biraben, occupies about a quarter of the work (Biraben 1976, vol. 2: 186-413) – and the text dates back over 50 years.

²⁹ The first studies on the Black Death in Europe are by Hecker, in 1832. As for the other Mediterranean areas affected by the scourge, the first essay on the plague in the Middle East is by Von Kremer, in 1880, and it is essentially based on the work of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (15th century). However, in 1976 McNeill complained about “a troublesome void” for plague investigations in countries outside Europe (McNeill 1976: 174-175). The following year Dols made a major contribution to plague studies in the Middle East with *The Black Death in the Middle East* – other studies have followed – but such studies on China and India are so far scarce. This scarcity is underlined by Sussman 2011, who analyses the Delhi Sultanate for India and the Yuan Dynasty for China. For the history of the first studies on Black Death in the Middle East, see Dols (1977: 27, note 47) and Conrad (1981).

³⁰ Their full name is Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Lawātī al-Ṭanjī (known as Ibn Baṭṭūṭa) and Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Juzayy al-Kalbī (known as al-Juzayy).

3. The Black Death in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's *Riḥla*

Almost all the information we have about IB and his travels is taken from the *Riḥla*.³¹ From it, we know that he was born in Tangier in 703/1304 and left his country in 725/1325 with the declared intention of making the Pilgrimage to the holy places of Islam (Mecca and Medina). In reality, he began a 29-year journey that, according to the *Riḥla*, would take him across most of the then-known world.³²

The book tells the story of IB who starting from the far west, the Maghreb, reached all the limits of the Islamic region. To the south, he travelled as far as present-day Tanzania, to the north to present-day Volgograd, and to the east to the coast of Guandong, on the Formosa Strait. He travelled far and wide in the Middle East,³³ made his Pilgrimage to Mecca at least four times, got to know the infancy of

³¹ IB's existence is nevertheless proven by the (little) information on him given by three of his contemporary authors: the Algerian Ibn Khaldūn (1858, vol. 1: 327-329); the Egyptian Ibn Ḥajar (1993b, vol. 3: 480-481) the Andalusian Ibn al-Khaṭīb (1863: 9). However, scholar have often note that no source from the countries IB claims to have visited reports his presence (see among others Gibb 2004 [1929]: 9; Monteil 1979: XII-XIII).

³² The following is a compendium of IB's adventures as related by the *Riḥla*, in order to introduce the work and to situate the Damascus Prayer in the story it tells. In the *Riḥla*, IB states several times that everything he reports is derived from his personal testimony or from trustworthy oral and written sources. But the sources are very rarely declared and as already mentioned many authoritative studies have demonstrated and/or hypothesised that IB and/or Ibn Juzayy borrowed and adapted passages from other sources in several parts of the work, so that today it is impossible to believe that the whole *Riḥla* is a faithful account of IB's personal adventures. This topic is not the focus of this article, but in the conclusive paragraph, the story of the Damascus prayer will also be considered from this point of view. In the following notes there are references to the main studies, criticisms and annotations that scholars have made on this subject (for other accounts of these studies see, among others, Dunn 1986: 313-316; Euben 2006: 63-85; Elger 2010). As the *Riḥla* also presents many internal chronological problems, the notes also give an account of scholars' attempts to reformulate the chronology of IB's travels in accordance with the itineraries, the travelling time required and the proven dates of some events. On the questions of chronology in the *Riḥla*, see esp. Husain (1976 [1953]: liv-lxxi); the in-depth (and never completed) study by Hrbek (1962); Gibb's notes to his 1958-1971 edition of the *Riḥla*; Dunn (1986, esp. 132-133, note 2); Allouche (1990); Elad (1987: 256-257); Waines (2010: 10-11).

³³ A number of possible and/or proven parts borrowed from other sources have been found in several passages of IB's *Riḥla* relating to the Middle East (Egypt, Mecca and Medina, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq). First of all, and especially for Damascus, from the *Riḥla* of Ibn Jubayr: see Defremery and Sanguinetti who first noted this in their "Préface" to IB's *Riḥla* EP (Monteil 1979: XXXII); Wright, who confirmed their annotation when he translated Ibn Jubayr's *Riḥla* into English (Wright 1907 [1852]: 17); Gibb (2004 [1929]: 11-12). In more recent times, Mattock offers a systematic comparison concluding that one-seventh of IB's *Riḥla* is borrowed more or less directly from three-sevenths of Ibn Jubayr's work (Mattock 1981: 211, see also Mattock 2008 [1965-1966]); Netton speaks of "plagiarism" (Netton 1984: 132, note 6). Another source has been identified in the *al-Riḥla al-maghribiyya* of Muḥammad al-ʿAbdari (Hoenerback 1940, who translated it into German, quoted by Elad 1987: 259 and *passim*); Elad offers a detailed comparison between IB's and al-ʿAbdari's *Riḥla* and concludes: "If we put aside those parts of the description of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's travels in Palestine which were borrowed from al-ʿAbdari, we are left with no more than two or three unconnected sentences, hanging in mid-air" (Elad 1987: 266; see also Elger 2010). Borrowing has been suggested from the works of Shams al-Dīn al-Dimashqī and al-Muqaddasī (Elad 1987: 262-263 and 270, note 43); al-Qazwīnī (Elad 1987: 78 and *passim*) and al-ʿUmari (Elger 2010: 73-75 and *passim*). In his detailed comparison of IB's *Riḥla* with other sources, Elger also suggests some borrowing from Ibn Ḥawqal's map for IB's itinerary in the Arabian Peninsula (Elger 2010: 84).

the Ottoman Empire³⁴ and entered Christian territory by visiting Constantinople.³⁵ In 1333, he reached India and settled in the Islamic Sultanate of Delhi, where for eight (or perhaps nine) years³⁶ he held the prestigious role of *qāḍī* [judge] in the service of the prodigal tyrant Muḥammad Ibn Tughluq. From there, he was appointed ambassador to Canton, a large port which at the time was home to a large colony of Muslim merchants.³⁷ This time the journey, by sea, ended with a shipwreck and, forced to change plans, IB stayed for (perhaps) a year and a half in the Maldives, a tropical paradise converted to

³⁴ Defremery and Sanguinetti first noted in their “Préface” some similarities between IB’s journey in Anatolia and both the encyclopaedic work *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār*, by the historian Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī [Chihāb el-dīn Aou’l’abbās Ahmed], and the descriptions by the geographer Abū al-Fidā [Abou’lféda] (Monteil 1979: XII-XIII). The journey was judged impossible for reasons of chronology and itineraries by Hrbek (1962: 468-469). Other more recent studies suggest that parts could have been borrowed from the work of al-ʿUmarī (Elger 2010: 75-78, who identifies this work as IB’s “favorite source,” Elger 2010: 79). From Anatolia, IB claims having travelled to Bulghār following the course of the Volga. But given the itinerary of more than 1,000 km which he claims to have traveled in ten days, it is impossible to believe that he actually made this journey. The first to raise doubts was Markwart in 1924 (cited by Hrbek 1962:472, note 86, 799 and *passim*), but it was Janicsek who stated that this journey was a “fabrication”, and suggested some borrowing from the *Risāla* of Ibn Faḍlān and the *Kitāb Masālik al-Mamālik* of al-Iṣṭakhrī or its re-edition by Ibn Ḥawqal (Janicsek 1929: 794-796). See also, among others, Janssens (1948: 101); Hrbek (1962: 471-473); Elad (1987: 257); Elger (2010: 71, note 2, who also suggests some borrowing from al-Gharnāṭī’s travelogue).

³⁵ Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (1372-1449) reports that according to the Andalusian *qāḍī* al-Balfiqī (1264-1366) who met IB in Granada, the latter used to tell very strange and exaggerated stories about his journey to Constantinople (Ibn Ḥajar 1993b, vol. 3: 480-481; see also above). In modern times, IB’s journey to the byzantine capital has been questioned by Wittek, who described it as “unbelievable” and at times “fanciful” (Wittek 1938: 371-372) and suggested that there could be some borrowing from some unidentified Tatar sources (Wittek 1949: 856). Janssens stated that although many studies on Byzantium cite IB’s *Rihla* as a source, it must be acknowledged that the circumstances of this journey are “suspicious” (Janssens 1948: 103). Micheau has noted that the narrative “is marred by contradictions and obscurities” (Micheau 1987: 56). Cfr. also Elad (1987: 268, note 17), and Conermann (1993), quoted by Trausch (2010: 140, note 4).

³⁶ Ibn Khaldūn reports that IB used to tell stories at the court of Fez about his Indian journey and some of his audience considered them too exaggerated to be credible (Ibn Khaldūn 1858, vol. 1: 328). Trausch had raised doubts on IB’s journey and stay in India by offering a comparison between the chapter on the history of the Delhi sultanate in the *Rihla* and the chronicle by the indian historian Ḍiyāʿ al-Dīn Baranī, that shows some possible “extraction” of information from the latter. Trausch also quotes Spies, who “pointed out the parallels between IB’s and al-ʿUmarī Indian passages” (Spies 1943: 8-9, “Übereinstimmungen zwischen Ibn Baṭṭūṭa und al-ʿUmarī;” see also Tresso 2021b) and Conermann, who gives a list of IB’s possible sources for India (Conermann 1993: 14; cf. Trausch 2010: 141, note 11 and 142, note 17). Some suspicious similarities have also been identified between IB’s itinerary in Malabar and al-Idrīsī’s map (Elger 2010: 85).

³⁷ There is evidence of the presence of an Arab-Persian colony of merchants and sailors in Canton since the beginning of the 7th century (Israeli 2000: 5-6 and *passim*. See also Yule 1994 [1916]: 174, note 2; Gabrieli 1975: 17; M. Hartmann in in *EF*, s.v. *al-Ṣīn*).

Islam by Maghrebi settlers.³⁸ In 1345-1346 he left for Ceylon and after a brief stop in the region of Ma^ʿbar,³⁹ he proceeded to Sri Lanka, Bengal, Malaysia, Indonesia and China.⁴⁰

Continuing his journey, IB returned west, travelled across India and in 1348 reached the Middle East at the time of the Black Death. He despatched several reports on its devastation and begged for divine mercy for dead friends he had hoped to see again. He made his last Pilgrimage to Mecca and once in Cairo he decided to return home. But the plague had preceded him to Morocco and claimed the life of his mother just before his arrival. By 1349 he arrived unscathed in his homeland and shortly afterwards left for Andalusia, where the Black Death had just killed King Alfonso XI of Castile. He then returned to Morocco and immediately continued south, reaching the Mali-Niger area.⁴¹ It was not until early 1354, having returned from this last journey and settled in Fez, that IB really put an end to his wanderings. During his travels, he claimed having crossed the equivalent of 44 modern states, covering about 120,000 kilometres. This record makes him, as he probably hoped, the protagonist of the longest journey described in medieval literature.⁴²

³⁸ IB's account of the Maldives is still considered one of the first descriptions of these Islands, but Janssen has noted that some information could have been taken from the works of al-Mas^ʿūdī, al-Bīrūnī and al-Idrīsī (Janssens 1948: 108-109). For the sources that first mention the Maldives and give some information about them, see Gray (1994 [1890]).

³⁹ Ma^ʿbar “ford, crossing place” was the name used by medieval Arab geographers to indicate the eastern coastal area of Deccan, and corresponds broadly to what is now called Coromandel (Yule 1861, vol. II: 268, note 1).

⁴⁰ Many authors have raised doubts and reservations about IB's journey to Indochina and China (see Ferrand 1914, vol. II: 433; Janssen 1948: 101-102; Elad 1987: 268, note 17). Other studies are quoted in Dunn (1986: 262, note 20). In recent times, it has been suggested an “assemblage” of oral and written sources (Fauvelle-Aymar and Hirsch 2003: 85-94) and that IB and/or Ibn Juzayy might have borrowed information from both al-^ʿUmarī's *Masālik al-abṣār* (Elger 2010: 79-81) and Marco Polo's *Milione* (Elger 2010: 7, where the author notes that the borrowing from the venetian traveller could concern not just information, but also some narrative techniques, including the two-author text). See also Almonte (2016), where the author examines the place names of the Chinese localities given by IB and reports several theories of both Western and Chinese scholars on the topic.

⁴¹ The reason that prompted IB to go to Mali (an order from the Sultan or a personal interest?) is a *vexata quaestio*, for which see Dunn (1986: 308, note 7). It has been noted that the data provided by IB on this area have made it possible to locate the Mali empire, which was at its most prosperous in the 14th century (Gabrieli 1975: 91), although in some cases suspicious similarities with the works of al-^ʿUmarī have been identified (Levtzion and Hopkins 1981: 280-281, Fauvelle-Aymar and Hirsch 2003: 83, 102 and passim. These latter also suggest that IB might have taken information from merchants and courtiers he met in a city in the Sahel).

⁴² “I have indeed – praise be to God – attained my desire in this world, which was to travel through the earth, and I have attained in this respect what no other person has attained to my knowledge”, IB replies in a smug tone to a saintly man of Abadan, in present-day south-western Iran, who wishes him to fulfil his wishes (al-Tāzī II: 17; Gibb II: 282 [EP 20]). There are several hypotheses on how many kilometres, according to the *Rihla*, he travelled: Husain (1976 [1953]: liii) hypothesises 124,200; Dunn (1986: 3) calculates 117,000; Yule (1994 [1916]: 55) suggests more than 120,000 – not counting the trips IB made during his stay in India.

A few years later, on the order of the Marinid Sultan Abū ʿInān,⁴³ IB dictated the diary of his journey and the court scribe, Ibn Juzayy – who was judged more able than him to guarantee a good literary portrayal of his fascinating stories – edited it.⁴⁴ As the text says, IB finished dictating his memories on 3 *Dhū al-Ḥijja* 756 (13 December 1355), while Ibn Juzayy’s final editing of the work ended in *Ṣafar* of the year 757 (February 1356). The text came to light with the pompous title *Tuḥfat al-nazzār fī gharāʾib al-amṣār wa-ʿajāʾib al-asfār* (“A Gift to Those Who Contemplate the Wonders of Cities and the Marvels of Travelling”) – but it is known as *Riḥla* “(Chronicle of) Travels.”⁴⁵

Ibn Juzayy, who was born in Granada in 721/1321, probably died less than one year later, in 758/1357. As for IB, the few reports we have were provided by an Egyptian chronicler of the 15th century, according to whom he retired to a provincial town (*bi-baʿḍ al-bilād*) and held the position of *qāḍī* until his death, which probably occurred in 770/1368-1369,⁴⁶ when he was 64 years old. In Tangier it is still possible to visit the tomb – a very modest one – that is said to be his.⁴⁷

⁴³ Abū ʿInān Fāris (1349-1359) was the 11th sultan of the Marinid dynasty, which ruled much of present-day Morocco from 1258 to 1465, extending its rule for short periods over parts of North Africa (present-day Algeria and Tunisia) and Andalusia.

⁴⁴ In his Introduction to IB’s *Travels*, Ibn Juzayy reports that the Sultan assigned him the task of “giving care to the pruning and polishing of its language” (al-Tāzī I: 152; Gibb I: 6 [EP 10]). According to Ibn Ḥajar, Ibn al-Khaṭīb reported that the Sultan ordered IB to write his travelogue [*amarahu bi-tadwīn riḥlatihi*] and Ibn Marzūq stated that on the Sultan’s order Ibn Juzayy verified and edit it [*ḥaqqāqa wa-ḥarrara*]. In the same passage, Ibn al-Khaṭīb also reports that IB “had a modest share of science” [*kāna mushārik fī shayʿ yasīru*] (Ibn Ḥajar 1993b, vol. 3: 480-481).

⁴⁵ Al-Tāzī (IV: 280); Gibb and Beckingham (IV: 977 [EP 448-449]). If Ibn Juzayy’s information is true, it took IB one, one and half year to dictate his memories and it only took him two or three months to write the definitive text of the *Riḥla*. Comparing the time required for the editing of the work in other languages, it should be noted that the accurate English edition by Gibb bears the date 1958 for vol. I, 1962 for vol. II and 1971 for vol. III. In the same year, unfortunately, Gibb died and Beckingham, who published vol. IV in 1994, completed his work. A separate index to the four volumes (vol. V) was edited by Bivar in 2000 “in affectionate memory of Charles Beckingham”, who died in 1998.

⁴⁶ The chronicler is the already mentioned Ibn Ḥajar, who in his famous *al-Durar al-kāmina*, a sort of “Who’s Who” about the most notable men and women of the 14th century CE, reports that according to Ibn Marzūq, IB “stayed (alive) until 770”, which corresponds to the period between 16 August 1368 and 7 July 1369 CE (Ibn Ḥajar 1993b, vol. 3: 481). However, the date of IB’s death is a controversial question: De Slane suggested that IB died in 779/1377-1378 (De Slane 1843: 183) while André Miguel says in 770/1368-9 or 779/1377 (EI2, s.v. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa), but neither cites his sources. According to the Chinese Li Guangbin, who translated the *Riḥla* into Chinese, he died in 1378 (Guangbin 2009: 1, cited by Almonte 2014: 34, note 7, who however does not cite Guangbin’s sources).

⁴⁷ However, it seems that this is not his real burial place: according to a letter from the Andalusian polymath Ibn al-Khaṭīb to IB himself, al-Tāzī hypothesises that IB spent the last years of his life in the city of Anfa, where he was buried. But this city was razed to the ground in the 15th century by the Portuguese and the present city of Casablanca was founded on its ruins (al-Tāzī I: 81).

Their work circulated for several centuries, especially in the form of manuscript *compendia*, in North Africa and the Middle East,⁴⁸ although scholars do not seem to have cited it as a reliable source (Dunn 1986: 317).⁴⁹ In Europe, the first translation in Latin of some extracts from one of these *compendia* was published at the beginning of the 19th century by the German Johann Kosegarten; a few years later the Englishman Samuel Lee translated another one in English in its entirety.⁵⁰ At some time during the French occupation of Algeria, five long manuscripts were found. Given to the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, between 1853 and 1858, Charles Defremery and Beniamino R. Sanguinetti used them to edit and translate into French the currently most complete version of the work, which has a detailed critical apparatus with notes and variations.⁵¹ Almost all the editions and translations of the *Rihla* of IB currently available are based on this text, which is considered the *Editio Princeps* of the work.⁵²

The *Rihla* of IB is probably the only travelogue by someone who claims to have journeyed to – and stayed – in places affected by the Black Death during the epidemic.⁵³ In 749/1348-1349, having preceded

⁴⁸ IB's *Rihla* seems to be first documented in the Middle East at the end of the 16th century (al-Tāzī I: 63). As far as I know, the first Arabic source to mention it is the famous work on the history of Andalusia *Nafh al-tīb min ghusn al-Andalus al-raṭīb* by al-Maqqarī (1577-1632), who twice quotes Ibn Juzayy as the *murattib* [arranger] of the *Rihla* of IB (al-Maqqarī 1875, I: 96 and 109).

⁴⁹ Waines (2010: 6) notes that given the presence of dozens of more or less complete manuscripts of the *Rihla* found in the Maghreb and Egypt (see note 51), at least in this area IB's travelogue must have enjoyed a certain popularity, but we do not have information about this. Also with regard to the subject of this paper, as we will see, no post-pandemic Arab author writing about the Black Death, quotes IB's *Rihla* among his sources.

⁵⁰ Kosegarten (1818) and Lee (1829). The manuscripts were purchased in the Middle East by two famous travellers: the German Ulrich J. Seetzen (1767-1811) and the Swiss Johann Burckhardt (1784-1817).

⁵¹ Two of these manuscripts represent the most complete version of the work that has emerged so far: which is why Renan said that "these manuscripts are undoubtedly the most precious literary spoils that the conquest of Algeria produced and will produce" (Renan 1994 [1853]: 29). A list of 30 manuscripts of IB's *Travels*, including photographs and a brief description of them, can be found in al-Tāzī (I: 15-74). The Japanese scholar Hikoichi Yajima, who edited an 8 vols. version of the *Rihla* in Japanese (1996-2002), has collected 29 manuscripts, but I could not verify this information given by Kosugi 2019: 106. For the history of IB's text in Europe, see Defremery (1994 [1848]: 1-3); Janssens (1948: 7-10); Defremery and Sanguinetti's "Préface" in Monteil (1979: XIII-XXVI); al-Tāzī (1997: 97-108); Ibrahimovich (1999: 41-46); Waines (2010: 6-8).

⁵² IB's *Travels* have so far been translated into about 15 languages and published in many different editions, the most popular of which (in European languages) are listed in the *Bibliography*. Books, essays, articles, films, songs, coins, stamps, etc. have all been dedicated to the life and work of IB. The airport of Tangier bears his name, as does one of the craters of the Moon. Moreover, dozens of exhibitions have been staged about his travels: the most recent, at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg (2015), has the title of the *Rihla*: "A Gift to Contemporators."

⁵³ As for Arab travellers, I do not know of any other reports: it is true that the Andalusian Ibn al-Khaṭīb (14th century) mentions IB as "one of the great travellers" who related news of the plague, suggesting that he has heard or read other reports, but IB is the only one he cites (Ibn al-Khaṭīb 1863: 8-9). As for travellers from other areas, the only one I am aware of is the Italian Franciscan friar Niccolò da Poggibonsi, who travelled throughout the Middle East between March 1346 and December 1350, but who does not mention the epidemic in his memoirs (Da Poggibonsi 1881. See also Golubovich 1927, vol. 5: 1-12, who gives a detailed summary of them, and Dols 1977: 57-58, note 80).

the plague in Aleppo, he claimed to have witnessed it in Damascus, Gaza, Jerusalem, Alexandria and Cairo. It was perhaps also because of the desolation of this part of the journey, strewn with the dead and with cities debilitated, that when he arrived in the Egyptian capital IB decided that it was time to return home, and in doing so came encountered the plague once again, in Tunis, Morocco and Andalusia. A few years later, he began to dictate his travelogue. Whether this last journey of the *Riḥla* is true or not, IB and Ibn Juzayy had certainly experienced life during the plague and heard a lot of information about it: their memories were contemporary, their emotions vibrant, which served to increase the authenticity of the event.

4. The prayer of Damascus in the *Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*

The *Riḥla* recounts that ten months after leaving Tangier, in January 1326, IB arrived in Egypt (at that time the heart of Islamic civilization and the centre of trade between the Mediterranean and the East) and felt predestined to make his great journey.⁵⁴ Therefore, when a setback prevented him from embarking from the Egyptian Red Sea coast to reach the Hijaz (the area of the Arabian Peninsula where Mecca and Medina are located) he decided to head north to join the Pilgrimage caravan that was to leave from Damascus. He took the opportunity to visit Palestine and Syria (*al-Shām*) which at the time, like Egypt, were under Mamluk rule. According to his own reports, IB arrived in Damascus on 9 *Ramaḍān* 726 (9 August 1326)⁵⁵ and left with the caravan for Mecca “when the new moon of *Shawwāl* appeared” (1 September).⁵⁶

⁵⁴ While affirming from the very beginning his willingness to set out on the pilgrimage to Mecca and visit the holy places of Islam (“[I was] swayed by an overmastering impulse within me and a desire long-cherished in my bosom to visit these illustrious sanctuaries,” *al-Tāzī* (I: 152); *Gibb* (I: 8 [EP 12-13]), Alexandria is where IB attributes the first “prediction” of his destiny to travel the world, when the pious *imām* Burhān al-Dīn foreshadows his journey to India, the Sind and China (*al-Tāzī* I: 186; *Gibb* I: 23-24 [EP 38]). A little further on, in a *zāwiya* [monastery, convent] not far from Alexandria, he reports of a dream that the local *shaykh* interprets by predicting the itinerary that he will actually follow: “You shall make the Pilgrimage (to Mecca) and visit (the tomb of) the Prophet (at al-Madīna), and you shall travel through the lands of al-Yaman and al-ʿIraq, the land of the Turks, and the land of India” (*al-Tāzī* I: 194; *Gibb* I: 31-32 [EP 52-53]).

⁵⁵ *Al-Tāzī* (I: 297); *Gibb* (I: 117-118 [EP 187]). IB reports that in the Syrian capital he heard a speech by the Damascene jurist and theologian Ibn Taymīya (1263-1328). In reality, however, from July of that year Ibn Taymīya was in Damascus, but was detained in the Citadel prison, where he remained until his death (26 September 1328). These considerations pose a number of problems of chronology and reliability of the narrated events, for which see, among others, Hrbek (1962: 421-430, esp. 42); Allouche (1990: 284-290).

⁵⁶ *Al-Tāzī* (I: 343); *Gibb* (I: 158 [EP 254]). The caravan of Damascus collected pilgrims from Syria, Anatolia and from the Iraq area, thus gathering several thousand people (in 1279, it seems there were 40,000 pilgrims; see Peters 1994: 172). The journey, which was very hard because most of it was through the desert, was not without danger and was made in about 20 stages

In accordance with the pattern, albeit flexible, adopted in the *Rihla* for the description of the most important cities in the Arabic region,⁵⁷ the long chapter on Damascus⁵⁸ begins with some verses of poetry dedicated to the city. This is followed by the description of the main mosques (first of all the Great Umayyad Mosque), the list of local religious authorities (*imām*, professors, teachers and *qāḍī*), the madrasas, the city gates and its most important mausoleums and sanctuaries. The last of these is the Mosque al-Aqdām (“of the Feet”) – also known as al-Qadam (“of the Foot”) – which has survived to this day in the southern part of Damascus and which owes its name to some footprints initially attributed to Moses and now to the Prophet, miraculously imprinted on a rock that was alleged to have been brought there from Basra.⁵⁹

At this point the description of Damascus is interrupted to introduce one of the most moving and dramatic stories of the work, that recounts an event – a rogatory and inter-religious prayer gathering – which took place in this mosque 22 years later. In 1348, at the time of the Black Death, IB returned to Damascus and it was then, in an accursed month of July, in a city terrified by the pandemic, that he claims to have witnessed the plea of the Damascenes, turning to God to save them from the scourge. That day, everyone was at al-Aqdām Mosque, and everyone had fasted for three days: the young and the old, men and women, notables and ordinary people, Muslims, Jews and Christians. Each one with their own Holy Book in their hand and terror in their heart. All come together to beseech, to pray, to implore, to invoke... And the Most High, according to IB, “lightened their affliction.”

Thus, after the long “sequence shot” over the city, where as always in IB’s *Rihla* – and in many other works of Arabic travel literature – the artistic and architectural dimension intersects with the religious, with social life and traditions, Damascus reveals its powerful spiritual side. This spiritual side

(Loiseau 2014: 68; al-Rashed 2014: 29). The date of IB’s departure from Damascus has been questioned by Allouche in his analysis on IB’s journey from Damascus to Mecca (Allouche 1990: 290-293).

⁵⁷ In the 1920s Janicsek proposed a fixed scheme according to which IB would describe the cities, consisting of a sequence “description – list of fruits and typical products – news about local customs – history of famous people – one or two anecdotes”. In the same article, however, the author himself acknowledged that there are many exceptions (Janicsek 1929: 792). In recent times the issue has been taken up by Fauvelle-Aymar and Hirsch, who propose a “descriptive plot” consisting of a fixed sequence and a series of possible variants, and apply it to IB’s travels in China, East Africa and Mali (Fauvelle-Aymar and Hirsch 2003, esp. 97-100). See also Trausch, who suggests “the same pattern” in IB’s accounts of his Indian experiences and in Lebanon (Trausch 2010: 162-163, note 141).

⁵⁸ Al-Tāzī (I: 297-337); Gibb (I: 117-157 [EP 188-254]). As we have seen, scholars have shown that most of IB’s description of Damascus is taken from the *Rihla* of Ibn Jubayr (see note 33).

⁵⁹ IB states that the tomb of Moses was located in the same Mosque (al-Tāzī I: 325; Gibb I: 142-143 [EP 227]), and the same information is found in Ibn Jubayr (n. d., 229), who states that there were nine footprints) and Ibn ʿAsākir (1995, vol. 2: 239; (cited by Talmon-Heller 2007: 55, note 139). For al-Aqdām/al-Qadam Mosque see also Anabsi (2008: 67-68); Patrizi (2011: 86-87).

does not manifest itself in the elegant architectural masterpiece of the Great Mosque, but in a suburban sanctuary “rich in *Baraka*,”⁶⁰ which owes its name to a relic venerated even before the advent of Islam because it was said to be of Moses, the prophet who spoke “face to face” to God and who is the most quoted in the three Abrahamic scriptures.⁶¹

The emotional impact of the story is accentuated by the fact that it represents the only case of protracted narrative, the only “flash forward” present in the *Rihla*. So, if it is true that throughout the whole work IB shows an “endearing tendency to bare himself,”⁶² it should be noted that when talking about al-Aqdām Mosque he really seems unable to avoid forcefully entering the scene. The narrator neglects not only the description of the place but also the chronological layout, and associates the mosque with one of the most exciting scenes he is describing – and which, in due course, he was to again relive.⁶³

Following this digression, the narration resumes with a chapter on the surroundings of Damascus, one on the customs of its inhabitants and another in which IB enumerates the *ijāza* “diplomas” of study he obtained from the local *shaykh*. Possibly, having returned with his memories to the emotional situation that he was to experience 20 years later, in listing these diplomas, he became confused and mentioned some that he probably obtained during his first stay.⁶⁴

5. Arabic text with translation

حكاية
شاهدت أيام الطاعون الأعظم بدمشق في أواخر شهر ربيع سنة تسع
وأربعين من تعظيم أهل دمشق لهذا المسجد ما يعجب منه، وهو أن ملك

⁶⁰ *Baraka* (“blessing”) is a term that refers to complex semantic fields and frequently appears in IB’s *Rihla*. From the original meaning of “grace, blessing” it came to indicate – especially in North Africa – a “beneficial force” granted by God to people, objects or places that can in turn transmit or emanate it. For the devotional practices widespread in medieval times to acquire the *baraka*, see Meri 1999 and for *Baraka* in IB’s *Rihla* see Wha (1991, quoted in Euben 2006: 228) and Methal (2012: 10).

⁶¹ For the many vestiges and holy places of Jews and Christians that Muslims “adopted” in Syria, see Talmon-Heller (2007: 187-189).

⁶² Mackintosh-Smith (2001: 10). Cf. Trausch (2010: 140), who states that “it is the author himself who acts as a central part of the story”. Some have come to ascribe to IB “a breaking autobiographical tendency to which everything is subordinate” (Gabrieli 1961: XIV).

⁶³ Al-Tāzī (IV: 179); Gibb and Beckingham (IV: 918 [EP 320]). This is one of the very rare occasions in the *Rihla* where the description of an event is repeated.

⁶⁴ This is Beckingham’s hypothesis (Gibb and Beckingham IV: 917, note 38), after Gibb had already noticed that IB claims to have obtained as many as 14 *ijāza* in a single month (Gibb I: 157, note 338). See also Dunn (1986: 61).

الأمراء نائب السلطان أرغون شاه أمر مناديا ينادي بدمشق أن يصوم الناس ثلاثة أيام، ولا يطبخ أحد بالسوق ما يؤكل نهارًا، وأكثر الناس بها إنما يأكلون الطعام الذي يصنع بالسوق، فصام الناس ثلاثة أيام متوالية كان آخرها يوم الخميس. ثم اجتمع الأمراء والشرفاء والقضاة والفقهاء وسائر الطبقات على اختلافها في الجامع، حتى غص بهم، وباتوا ليلة الجمعة ما بين مصلٍ وذاكرٍ وداعٍ، ثم صلوا الصبح، وخرجوا جميعا على أقدامهم، وبأيديهم المصاحف، والأمراء حفاة وخرج جميع أهل البلد ذكورا وإناثا، صغارا وكبارًا وخرج اليهود بتوراتهم، والنصارى بإنجيلهم، ومعهم النساء والولدان، وجميعهم باكون متضرعون إلى الله بكتبه وأنبيائه، وقصدوا مسجد الأقدام وأقاموا به في تضرعهم ودعائهم إلى قرب الزوال، وعادوا إلى البلد، وصلوا الجمعة. وخفف الله تعالى عنهم فأنتهى عدد الموتى إلى ألفين في اليوم الواحد - وقد انتهى عددهم بالقاهرة ومصر إلى أربعة وعشرين ألفا في اليوم الواحد. وبالباب الشرقي منارة بيضاء يقال إنها التي ينزل عيسى عليه السلام عندها حسبما ورد في صحيح مسلم. (Al-Tāzī 1997 I: 325-326).

Anecdote

“I witnessed at the time of the Great Plague at Damascus in the latter part of the month of Second Rabīʿ of the year 49 (July 1348), a remarkable instance of the veneration of the people of Damascus for this mosque.⁶⁵ Arghūn-Shāh,⁶⁶ king of the amīrs and the Sultan’s viceroy, ordered a crier to proclaim through Damascus that the people should fast for three days and that no one should cook in the bazaar during the daytime anything to be eaten (for most of the people there eat no food but what has been prepared in the bazaar).⁶⁷ So the people fasted for three successive days, the last of which was a Thursday. At the end of this period, the amīrs, sharīfs, qāḍīs, doctors of the Law,⁶⁸ and all other classes of the people in their several degrees, assembled in the Great Mosque, until it was filled to

⁶⁵ Al-Aqdām Mosque, which IB has just described.

⁶⁶ Sayf al-Dīn Arghūn Shāh al-Nāṣirī (d. 1349), whose presence in Damascus as lieutenant of the Mamluk Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ibn Qalāwūn is attested by chroniclers (see among others Ibn Kathīr 2010, vol. 16: 341; Ibn Iyās 1984, vol. 1: 534-535).

⁶⁷ On the ancient Middle Eastern habit of buying cooked food at markets, see among others Scarcia Amoretti (2001: 207 and note).

⁶⁸ Emir (*amīr*) is a title which properly indicates a “prince” or a “commander,” but in the Mamluk administrative and military organisation was applied to dignitaries of various grades and categories. *Sharīf* designates the direct descendants of the Prophet, who still today form a prestigious aristocracy and can therefore be equated with “nobles.” Finally, *qāḍī* is a “judge” of the Islamic court appointed by the central power, with the power to issue sentences and impose their execution in religious, civil and criminal matters.

overflowing with them, and spent the Thursday night there in prayers, liturgies, and supplications. Then, after performing the dawn prayer (on the Friday morning), they all went out together on foot carrying Qur’āns in their hands – the amīrs too barefooted. The entire population of the city joined in the exodus, male and female, small and large; the Jews went out with their book of the Law (*Tawrāt*) and the Christians with Gospel, their women and children with them; the whole concourse of them in tears and humble supplications, imploring the favour of God through His Books and His Prophets. They made their way to the Mosque of the Footprints (*al-Aqdām*) and remained there in supplication and invocation until near midday, then returned to the city and held the Friday service. God Most High lightened their affliction; the number of deaths in a single day reached a maximum of two thousand, whereas the number rose in Cairo and Old Cairo⁶⁹ to twenty-four thousand in a day.

At the East Gate of Damascus is a white minaret, said to be that upon which Jesus (on him be peace) will descend, as is stated in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim” (Gibb I: 143-144 [EP 228-229]).

6. “The words to say it:” analysis of the lexicon

As far as the lexicon is concerned, the presence of an interesting *hapax* may be noticed: *ṭāʿūn*, “plague.” The story of the prayer gathering of Damascus is indeed the only occasion in the *Riḥla* where the plague is called *ṭāʿūn*, which is the specific Arabic term for the disease. At all other times, the pandemic is called *wabāʿ*⁷⁰ that more properly means “epidemic” in general,⁷⁰ but which, in this part of the *Riḥla*, is always used, with the definite article, to designate the Black Death: *al-wabāʿ*⁷¹, “the epidemic.”⁷¹ On this single occasion, moreover, the name of the epidemic is qualified by an adjective to the highest degree, the elative: *al-ṭāʿūn al-aʿẓam*, “the biggest/greatest plague.”⁷²

⁶⁹ At that time, the term *Miṣr* (here translated as “Old Cairo”) designated both Egypt and the ancient capital *Fuṣṭāṭ*, founded in 642 by General ʿAmrū Ibn al-ʿĀṣ on the site of the ancient Roman fortress of Babylon, near Memphis, which the Arabs conquered in 639 and where they built a *miṣr*, a “fortified camp”. Cairo (*al-Qāhira*, “the Victorious”) was, on the other hand, the new city that the Fatimids started building in 969 to the northeast of the ancient nucleus of *Fuṣṭāṭ*, which was progressively incorporated into the new – and increasingly larger – capital. Today, the term *Miṣr* refers to Egypt, but in Cairo, the district of *Miṣr al-qādima* (“Old Miṣr”) still keeps its old name.

⁷⁰ Al-Nawawī (1929: 204). For a more in-depth analysis of Arabic terminology on the plague see Dols (1977: 315-319; Appendix 2, “The Arabic Terminology for Plague”) and Conrad (1982), who examines the use of both terms since the early times of Islam. Other annotations can be found in Ayalon (1946: 67) and Sublet (1971). For this and other aspects of the narration of the Black Death in IB’s *Riḥla*, see Tresso (2021a).

⁷¹ In the *Riḥla*, the word *wabāʿ*⁷¹ is also used to designate three epidemics in India and this led some scholars to assume that they were plague. However, recent studies have established that it is not until the 17th century that the disease is first substantiated in the sub-continent (on this misunderstanding see Tresso 2021b).

⁷² Neither Gibb nor any of the translators into the European languages maintain the adjective in the elative degree (Defremery and Sanguinetti in Yerasimos (1997, vol. I: 234-235, *la grande peste*); Charles-Dominique (1995: 458-459, *la grande peste*); Fanjul and Arbós (1993: 193-194, *la gran peste*); Tresso (2006: 114, *la grande peste*). However, it should be noted that in none of these

The words used in the text are also important insofar as they continually repeat and underline the theme of the story. In this article the etymology or the use of each of them will not be analysed, but it should be noted that in the central passage, consisting of 58 Arabic words, there are nine verbal forms concerning the act of “praying.” *Muṣallin*, *dhākir* and *dāʿin* are participles and although each conveys a different shade of meaning, they can all be translated as “prayer”. *Taḍarraʿa* (“to implore”) is a verb and *taḍarruʿ* and *duʿāʿ*, which correspond to “imploing” and “supplication,” are verbal nouns such as *taʿzīm*, “veneration,” and *ṣalāt*, which appears twice and designates “prayer:” primarily the canonical one. The same terms are widely used in the texts of medieval Arabic chronicles to describe this and other rogatory rites that took place during the Black Death. However, unlike almost all other Arab chronicles, the use of the verb *dhakara* which refers to *dhikr*, the prayer of the Sufis – an environment to which IB was particularly attracted, should be noted.⁷³

As is well known, repetition is a founding feature of Arabic aesthetics – not only literary – but in this case it is evident that it is used both to involve readers by allowing them to enter the climate of anguish and terror in which the ritual took place and to fully describe the power of the prayer which, according to the epilogue proposed in the story, was accepted by the Most High. Last but not least, the intensity of the prayer is amplified as a whole by the explicit presence of women, children and, above all, the faithful of other religions, Jews and Christians, and their sacred texts, which are mentioned only on this occasion in the *Riḥla*.⁷⁴

languages the use of an elative adjective to designate the plague is attested. Arabic sources designate the pandemic in different ways: as for the authors cited in this article, note *al-ṭāʿūn al-ʿaẓīm* (“the Enormous Plague,” Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba 1994, vol. 1: 541); *al-fanāʿ al-kabīr/al-ʿaẓīm* (“the Great/Enormous Destruction,” al-Maqrīzī 1971, vol. 4: 85; Ibn Iyās 1984, vol. 1: 523; Ibn Ḥabīb al-Ḥalabī, fol. 1); *al-ṭāʿūn/al-wabāʿ al-ʿām* (“the Universal Plague/Epidemic,” al-Sakhāwī 1992, vol. 1: 97); *al-ṭāʿūn al-jārif* (“the Overwhelming Plague,” Ibn Khaldūn 1970: 55 and al-Nawawī 1929: 105, where the author explains that he uses this adjective for the large number of deaths). For other expressions used in medieval Arabic sources to designate the Black Death, see Dols (1974a: 443, note 2) and Dols (1977: 5, note 5).

⁷³ For *dhikr*, see below. On IB and his relationship with Sufis, see Gibb (2004 [1929]: 33-39); Dunn (1986: 20-23); Manduchi (2000), in particular the chapter with the captivating title “Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, the *lay* Sufi” (108-122); Methal (2012: 5). Almost all the chroniclers considered in this article refer to this and other prayers for the plague as *duʿāʿ* [supplication]: only Ibn Iyās (1984, vol. 1: 531) uses the verb *dhakara* in his description of a similar rogatory prayer (*duʿāʿ*) held in Cairo during the Black Death.

⁷⁴ Actually, the Gospel is also mentioned in Constantinople, in the only part of the *Riḥla* which takes place in a non-Islamic region, when IB claims to have entered a monastery and seen a young man sitting in a pulpit, “reading the Gospel in the most beautiful voice that I have ever heard” (al-Tāzī II: 256; Gibb II: 511-512 [EP 439]). On the Tōrāh, the Psalms and the Gospels, which the Quran considers books revealed by God to the prophets Moses, David and Jesus (Qur 5, 43 and *passim*), see among others Adang (1996).

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⁸¹ Al-Maqrīzī’s text on the Black Death is translated into French in Wiet 1962. The appeal of al-Maqrīzī is probably due to the name of a neighbourhood in Baalbek, Lebanon, where his ancestors lived (Mallett 2014: 162). For his work see Mujani and Yaakub 2013 and Dols (1977: 7-8), who defines it as “the most important (though not contemporary) historical text dealing with the Black Death in Egypt and Syria”.

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The Coptic Theme in Egyptian novels

The case of *Bayt al-Qibṭiyya* (“The house of the Copt woman”) by ‘Aṣraf al-‘Aṣmāwī

Naglaa Waly

This article discusses *Bayt al-Qibṭiyya* (“The house of the Copt woman”), a novel by ‘Aṣraf al-‘Aṣmāwī; published in 2019, the novel is a recent iteration of the Coptic theme in Egyptian fiction.

The Copts are an integral component of Egyptian society. They form part of Egypt’s social fabric and today constitute some 8% to 9% per cent of the population. Their presence has been evident in the Egyptian novel since its birth. In the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, they were at the forefront of the renaissance that led the country towards a cultural and economic resurgence.

Discrimination against Copts in Egypt increased markedly in the second half of the twentieth century, notably since the Revolution of 1952 and in the context of the Islamic revival following the Arab-Israeli war of 1967. This trend gained strength during the Sadat era and erupted in numerous episodes of religious violence during the 1970s. The violence continued during the Mubarak era and escalated in the wake of the Arab Spring in 2011.

This contentious issue is reflected in modern Egyptian literature. In his novel, al-‘Aṣmāwī addresses the tensions between Muslims and Coptic Christians in Upper Egypt through the story of Huda Habīb, the Coptic heroine. In order to contextualize his treatment of the theme and afford a broader perspective on its development in Egyptian literature, this article also outlines its representation in other Egyptian novels at different points in history.

Keywords: Egyptian novels, New sensibility, Copts, Coptic theme, minority discourse, Aṣraf al-‘Aṣmāwī

1. Introduction

According to Hafez (1994), Abu al-Deeb (2000), Meyer (2001), and in particular Christiana Phillips (2019), the political and cultural crisis in the late 1960s had an aesthetically positive impact on Egyptian and Arabic literature, ushering in a period of experimentation, cultural and imaginative enrichment in which a host of innovative narrative strategies such as polyphony, intertextuality and fragmentation were deployed. The break with the conventional narrative structures and traditional values, including the use of the first person to create inter-subjectivities, the incorporation with dream, legend and

poetry and the rejection of linear time, was termed *al-ḥassāsiyya al-ḡadīda*¹ (“the new sensibility”) by the Egyptian writer Idward al-Ḥarrāṭ. Abu al-Deeb, quoted in Phillips (2019), speaks of the second decade of the aesthetic revolution and the wider Arab context in terms of the collapse of totalising discourse and the emergence of minority voices. Against this backdrop, Coptic Christianity provides opportunities to represent and explore minority discourse and marginalised identity.

The Copts² are an integral component of Egyptian society. They form part of Egypt’s social fabric and today constitute some 8% to 9% per cent of the population.³ Their presence has been evident in the Egyptian novel since its birth. In the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, they were at the forefront of the renaissance that led the country towards a cultural and economic resurgence (Hasan 2003). However, their influence decreased notably from 1952 to 1970 and Copts began to suffer from discrimination. In the executive and the parliament, for example, Copts represented less than one per cent and the ministries that they represented during this period were marginal.⁴ There is broad agreement among scholars (Wakin 1963; Cannuyer 2001; Hasan 2003; Osman

¹ According to the Egyptian writer, the trends of the new literary sensibility, inaugurated through the literary journal *Gallery 68* (of which he was one of the editors), are: 1. the *objectifying* current (*tayyār al-taṣayyi*); 2. the interior current (*al-tayyār al-dāḥili*); 3. the revival of the literary heritage (*istiḥāu al-turāt*); 4. magical realism (*al-tayyār al-wāqī al-saḥri*); 5. the new realism (*al-Wāqīya al-ḡadīda*; al-Ḥarrāṭ 1993: 19-20).

² The terms *Copt* and *Coptic* are variously used to denote either the members of the Coptic Orthodox Church, the largest Christian body in Egypt, or as generic terms for Egyptian Christians: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Copt>, While the Arabic word *al-qibṭ* (which in modern use leads to the singular *qibṭī* “Copt” and the plural *al-aqbāṭ*) is derived from the Greek *aegyptos* and originally meant “Egyptians.”

³ Reliable numbers are hard to find out but estimates suggest they make up somewhere between 8% and 9% of the population. Alessia Melcangi and Paolo Maggiolini argue that the census figures of 2006, released by the official statistical agency of Egypt, the Central Agency for Mobilization and Statistics, suggest that the population, including those living abroad, is estimated to have reached 76.5 million. A study published in 2011 by the Pew Research Centre’s Forum on Religion and Public Life states that the Christian population represents 5.3 % of the Egyptian one (Pew Research Centre 2011), as opposed to the widely used media figure of 10%. Researchers arrived at the number from Egypt’s 2006 census data underlining that “for decades the Christian population in Egypt has been less than 10% of the population.” According to this research “the highest share reported in the past century was in 1927, when the census found that 8.3% of Egyptians were Christian; in each of the eight subsequent censuses, the Christian share of the population gradually shrank” (Harrington 2011). In spite of these new data, others estimate that the number of Copts oscillates between 5 and 6 million, or 8% to 9% of the entire population (Maggiolini and Melcangi 2020). See also Pennington (1982).

⁴ In the conflict between Nasser and the Muslim Brotherhood, Nasser issued two decrees: In 1957, he enforced religion as a basic subject in the school curricula, whereas previously, as established by the Wafid in 1937, religion was a complementary subject in schools to increase religious consciousness. He reformed the al-Azhar University to meet contemporary demands, but confined it to Muslim students, excluding Copts completely. The second feeling was of equality on the economic level. Nationalization in July 1961 did not differentiate between Muslims and Copts. The Nationalization process however affected Copts more than Muslims because it abolished many of the skilled jobs which Copts excelled in. In general, Copts lost 75% of their work and property. In the executive and in parliament, Copts represented less than one percent. The ministries which

2013; Tadros 2013; Melcangi 2017) who assert that uneven changes for Copts in Egypt have created community tensions and raised contentious issues since the 1952 Revolution, particularly against the backdrop of the Islamic revival that followed the Arab-Israeli war 1967 and during the Sadat era. The communal strife⁵ of the 1970s continued during the Mubarak era and escalated in the wake of the Arab Spring of 2011; it is not only reflected in news headlines but also represented in literary works.

The presence of the Coptic theme in Egyptian novels has received a relatively little attention. In this study, We take into account the studies by Siddiq (2007), Philips (2019) and Youssef (2019). The last-named argues that the presence of minorities in Egyptian novels is a new trend and deals with the representation of marginalized communities (Nubian, Christian Coptic, Bedouins and Jewish populations). She refers to this new trend in contemporary Egyptian novels as a “new consciousness novel.”

This article aims to discuss the novel *Bayt al-Qibṭiyya* (“The House of the Copt Woman;” 2019) by the Egyptian writer Ašraf al-‘Ašmāwī as a recent model of the Coptic theme in post-2011 Egyptian narrative. In his novel, al-‘Ašmāwī addresses the tensions between Muslims and Copt Christians in Upper Egypt through the story of Huda Habib, the Coptic heroine. Although it is not the first one that deals with the Coptic theme in Egypt,⁶ it differs from the others, due to its new sensibility in dealing with this delicate issue especially in Upper-Egypt and its focus on the discrimination of Copt women.

Copts represented from 1952-70 were marginal, and no Copts were given important ministries throughout that period (Ibrahim 1996).

⁵Sectarian violence in Republican Egypt went through different stages: 1. a period of relative calm throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s; 2. a period from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s in which violence was mainly provoked and exercised by Islamist extremists; 3. the contemporary period, in which sectarian violence took a more spontaneous and diffuse character and was often triggered by petty, everyday conflicts. A common feature was that sectarian violence mostly took place in the towns and villages of Upper Egypt, its hotbed being the provinces of Asyūṭ, Suhāḡ, and Qinā, but also in other parts of provincial Egypt: a considerable communal strife starting from attacks in Ḥānka (Cairo governorate) in 1972 and in al Zāwiya al-Ḥamara (Cairo governorate) in June 1981. During Mubarak’s (Mubārak) rule, the sectarian strife got far worse with multiple killings in Manfalout (Asyūṭ governorate) (1990), Imbāba (Cairo governorate) 1991, Manšiya (Asyūṭ governorate) 1992, Al-Qawšiyya (Asyūṭ governorate) 1994, Abū Qurqāš (Minyā governorate) 1997, Al-Kušḡ (Sūhāḡ governorate) 1998 Alexandria 2005. The last decade of Mubarak’s era witnessed repeated outbreaks of sectarian violence between Muslims and Copts, which culminated in particularly violent attacks on Coptic Churchgoers in Nag’ Hammādī (Qinā Governorate) 2010 and the bombing of the Church in Alexandria 2011. Even after 2011 there have been suicide bombs in Imbāba in 2011 and in Alexandria and Ṭanṭā with many victims on april 2017 (Elsasser 2014).

⁶ In the last two decades, several novels have dealt overtly with the issues of Coptic-Christians and the marginalization of Copts: *Waṣāyā al-lawḡ al-maksūr* (“Commandments of the broken tablet;” 2000) by Ġabriyāl Zaki (b. 1945), *Mazāḡ al-Tamāsīh* (“Crocodile Mood;” 2000) by Ra’ūf Mus’ad (b. 1938), ‘*Azāzil* (“Azazeel;” 2008) by Yūsuf Zaydān (b.1958), *Ḥātim Sulaymān* (“King Solomon’s Ring;” 20008) by Šarīf Malīka (b. 1958), *al-Bārmān* (“Barman;” 2014) by Ašraf al-‘Ašmāwī, *al-Marḡūm* (“The Deceased;” 2014) by Ḥassan Kamāl (b. 1974) *Nisā’al-qāhirah-Dubay* (“Women from Cairo and Dubai,” 2014) by Nāsir ‘Irāq (b. 1961) and *Ibn al-Qibṭiyya* (“The son of the Copt woman;” 2016) by Walīd ‘alā’ al-Dīn (b. 1973).

The literary analysis of the novel is based on a close textual analysis, albeit focusing on its portrayal of a Coptic theme and the new sensibility in dealing with religious minority issues. We will examine other significant writing techniques of the author.

This article is not intended to be exhaustive or comprehensive on the Coptic theme in the Egyptian novel. It focuses on the portrayal of the Coptic theme and religious strife in al-‘Ašmāwī’s novel.

In order to contextualize his treatment of the theme and afford a broader perspective on its development in Egyptian literature, this article also outlines its representation in other Egyptian novels at different relevant points in modern Egyptian history. Several scholars (Hafez 1976; al-Badawi 1992; Hafez 1993; Mehrez 1994; Hafez 1994; Siddiq 2007; Jacquemond 2008; Avino 2011; El Desouky 2014) generally accept the close correlation between historical context, State, socio-cultural milieu and literary production in Egypt. Against this backdrop, in dealing with the Egyptian novel, we have to take into account to some extent the social, political and cultural facets of Egypt. We can assert along with Hafez (1994) the vital interaction between the novel and its socio-cultural milieu.

To trace back the changes in the Coptic theme and the reverberations of some historical events in portraying characters and the treatment of themes belonging to the Coptic religion, we have adopted the division suggested by Jacquemond (2008), who divides Egyptian intellectual history into generations related to historical periods:

Finally, it was from this time onward that Egypt’s intellectual history began to be divided up into a succession of generations, the emergence of each one of which was linked to a major event in national history. Thus, the 1919 generation, also called the generation of “men of letters,” was succeeded by the 1952 generation, which took pride of place under Nasser, this generation being succeeded in turn by the generation of the 1960s, which emerged following the 1967 disaster. Finally, there is the generation of the 1990s, which was also formed following a major historical trauma, this time the second Gulf War (1991) Jacquemond (2008: 8).

2. The depiction of the Coptic theme in the Egyptian Novel through historical transformations

2.1 Men of letters

We can find the first presence of the Coptic theme in the contemporary Egyptian novel in *al-Qiṣāṣ Ḥayāt* (“The equality in punishment is a life;” 1905) by ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ḥuḍīr al-Būqurqāṣī (al-Nassāğ 1980). The author depicts, in a short novel (88 pages) the story of a Christian community in Upper Egypt. It is based on a true incident that took place in the town of Abū Qurqās in the Governorate of al-Minyā in

1903. The plot revolves round the rivalry of two young men for their cousin's love. As Matti Moosa asserts:

The author treats a sensitive subject and offers a liberal idea. al-bū Qurqasi also touches upon the sensitive subject of love and defends the rights of a woman to marry the man she loves. This is a liberal idea supported by the writer, whose society never offered woman such freedom (Moosa 1997: 255).

Here, religion is not spotlighted. The whole story is used to criticise archaic traditions and backward customs in the Egyptian countryside. Nearly a decade later, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal in his foundational Egyptian novel *Zaynab*⁷ also addressed some of these archaic traditions, social and political issues regarding Egyptian villages and the peasantry. In this we find the reflection of the cultural milieu of those days which witnessed the emergence of liberal nationalist ideologies. The prominent figure for the emergence of National Ideology was Aḥmad Luṭfī al-Sayyid (1872-1963) who espoused a secular nationalism. The rise of the Novel as a literary genre was linked to those ideologies as al-Sayyid inspired the social and political thought of the following generation of writers and intellectuals associated with the influential journal *al-Siyāsa* ("Politics"),⁸ the most prominent of whom was Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal (1888–1956), one of the main theorists of National Literature.

Therefore, the first writers of novels in Egypt were nationalists who used the novel to foster a national consciousness, which was secular at its core, as it appeared clearly in the first novels as in Maḥmūd Ṭāhir Ḥaqqī's *'Aḍrā' Dinšawāy* ("The Maiden of Dinshaway," 1906),⁹ Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's *Zaynab* (1914/1916) and *'Awdat ar-Rūḥ*¹⁰ ("The Return of the Spirit;" 1933) by Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm.

⁷ The novel depicts life in the Egyptian countryside through the traditional romantic relationship between the two young protagonists Ḥamid and Zaynab and he deals with the important social and political issues of the day regarding Egyptian villages and the peasantry: poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and the evils of colonial administration.

⁸ *al-Siyāsa* was launched by *Ḥizb al-aḥrār al-dustūriyyīn* ("The Liberal Constitutional Party") on 1922. Al-Sayyid later founded the weekly cultural supplement *al-Siyāsa al-Uṣbū'īyya* ("The Weekly Politics") in 1926.

⁹ The novel dramatizes the events that took place in the Delta village of Dinšawāy in 1906. A party of British officers out pigeon hunting near the village were attacked by a group of peasants to whom the pigeons belonged. In the confrontation that followed, an officer was severely wounded and subsequently died of sun-stroke. The British reprisal was swift and brutal. A military trial ended in the execution of four villagers. The novel was thus written as a direct political response to the ruthless interventions of colonialism.

¹⁰ The novel is mostly set in Cairo where young Muḥsin lives with his three uncles and illiterate aunt Zannūba. It narrates of the life of young Muḥsin (fifteen years old) and the intense harmony he finds with his relatives. They share everything, the same circumstances, the same emotions and the same misfortunes. In a nationalistic connection, al-Ḥakīm refers to the family using *al-ša'b* ("the people") and in two chapters he relates that Muḥsin and his uncles took part in the Egyptian revolution of 1919 and were arrested.

According to Siddiq (2007), in the first half of the twentieth century the Status of religious minorities in modern Egypt was from the outset entangled with the design of European occupation, colonization and hegemony.¹¹

During the first half of the twentieth century, characters representing these non-Muslim communities stood for the European Cultural other. While this paradigm reigned, the indigenous Christian Copts were hardly visible in the fictional landscape (Siddiq 2007: 152).

In point of fact, the beginning of twentieth century, due to the policies established by Muḥammad Alī, and continued by his successors represented the perfect era of a complete integration of Copts and Jews¹² into the connective tissue of Egyptian society.

This complete integration was reinforced by the process of secularization of Egyptian society in the 1930s, as it appears in *al-Yawm wa al-Ġad* (“Today and Tomorrow;” 1928) by Salāma Mūsā (1887-1958).¹³ In this essay, he asserts that religion is no longer the basis of the community, but a matter of individual ‘private faith’ (Suleiman (2003).

We find an explicit testimony of a secularized society in the novels of Ibrāhīm al-Māzinī (1890-1949).¹⁴ In *Ibrāhīm al-Kātib* (1931),¹⁵ the chapters start with poetic quotations taken mainly from the Old Testament, in particular from the Songs of Solomon. In his work, Jews and Christians are represented

¹¹ During that period the British sensed the threat of a national revolution against them. They resorted to different mechanisms for quashing the National Movement, most notably by separating Copts and Muslims. Britain sought to carry out its plans of segregation in the following manner: first, to deal with Copts on an ethnic basis; second, to isolate Copts from the national movement that fought against them; and third, to break up local Coptic religious institutions. See also Ibrahim (1996).

¹² Muḥammad ‘Alī (1769-1849) converted Egypt into a heterogeneous country that created a space for Jews, Copts and foreigners on the model of European countries. Then, thanks to the law of 1858, which allowed many foreigners to buy agricultural lands like the Egyptians, many Jews, and Christian foreigners came to invest and work in Egypt and a large part of them obtained Egyptian citizenship. They played a strong role in the industrial and economic development in Egypt that became a cosmopolitan country (cf. Fahmy 1992: 17).

¹³ Egyptian journalist, encyclopaedist, socialist, political campaigner, enthusiastic moderniser and “westerniser”. Born ca. 1887 to a well-to-do Coptic family near Zaḡāzīq, he died on 5 August 1958.

¹⁴ One of the chief literary figures of the generation of Ṭaha Husayn and ‘Abbās al-‘Aqqād. al-Māzinī had already distinguished himself as a poet, critic and essayist before he became known as a novelist and short story writer. In 1921 he collaborated with al-‘Aqqād in publishing the two iconoclastic volumes of literary criticism known as *al-Diwan*, in which they mercilessly attacked the literary establishment of the time. al-Māzinī was also an accomplished translator from English. al-Māzinī wrote five novels in all, the first being *Ibrāhīm al-Katib* (“Ibrahim the Writer”).

¹⁵ Written in 1925-1926 and published in 1931, the novel presents the title character’s romantic adventures with three different women. In a 1939 article addressed to al-Hakīm, the author admits that the novel contains pages from his life. Cf. Mossa 1997:328-332). This represents one of the most discussed cases of literary borrowing in the history of the modern Arabic novel (Paniconi 2019).

in an ordinary way without any negatives features or stereotypes, reflecting the liberal Egyptian national identity without any religious distinction.

2.2. Nağib Maḥfūz and the 1952 generation

The Liberal nationalism started to change in 1930s and the situation of Copts changed categorically in the aftermath of the Second World War due to the ideology of Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁶ This new status of Copts and the attempt by the Muslim Brothers to reify the nation as a religious community of Muslim created a counter-discourse in Egyptian narrative and the presence of Copts became more continuous and emphasized by the principle of Engagement. In this period of the 1940s and early 1950s, literary commitment became a crucial issue for many writers and intellectuals in Egypt and the Arab world. The translation of Jean-Paul Sartre's famous article "Qu'est-ce que la littérature?" in this highly politicized period had aroused a lot of debates between intellectuals and writers. "Engagement" was first translated by Ṭaha Ḥusayn as *iltizām*.¹⁷

According to Siddiq (2007), in Maḥfūz' "Cairene Trilogy" this counter-discourse takes the form of a discursive assertion by Kamāl about Riyāḍ Qaldas' quintessential Egyptian physiognomy. In the novel's economy of representation, pharaonic features assign historical precedence and this, in turn, proffers entitlement. It is hard to imagine a greater affiliation with Egypt than that inscribed in the flesh.

In fact, Nağib Maḥfūz (1911-2006) is one of the first authors who overtly deals with the discrimination of Copts. In *al-Sukkariyya* ("Sugar Street"), the third part of his Trilogy (1956-1957),¹⁸ a

¹⁶ During the severe worldwide economic downturn, when the Wafd Party failed to keep their promises and Egypt's economy suffered from foreign exploitation; in those years the Muslim Brotherhood emerged with a program of Islamic reform, promoting Islam as the solution to society's problems. They called the Copts 'Ahl al-*ḍimma* and claimed the Caliphate. Their emotive rhetoric led to the desecration of churches and the sabotage of Christian funerals and weddings. The Muslim Brotherhood was banned in 1948.

¹⁷ Ṭaha Ḥusayn spoke about *engagement* in the literary magazine *al-Kātib al-Miṣrī* in three articles: *al-adab bayn al-itiṣāl wa al-infiṣāl* ("The literature between connection and separation;" no.11 of August 1946), *Mulāḥẓāt* ("Remarks;" no.21 di August 1947), *Fi al-adab al-Farinsī* ("About French Literature;" no.26 November 1947) the term gained immense prominence, and thus the idea of the politically and socially engaged author as a spokesperson of nations, political parties or ideologies became the all-embracing concept in the discourse of Arabic literary criticism in the mid-twentieth century and was expressed in the editorial note of the Lebanese periodical *al-adab* when it published its inaugural manifesto on literary commitment (*al-adab al-multazim*) Cf. https://al-adab.com/sites/default/files/aladab_1953_v01_01_0001_0002.pdf

¹⁸ It is set in Cairo during British colonial rule and reveals the obscurities of a seemingly traditional society falling into rupture and moral decay. It portrays a middle-class merchant and corrupt husband named Sayyid 'Abd al-Ġawād who lives a double life: a conservative, tyrannical one with his family and a hidden, an immoral one with his mistresses. The events of The Sugar

new sensibility for the Copts is displayed as we perceive in the dialogue between Kamāl ‘abd al-Ġawād and his Coptic friend Riyāḍ Qaldīs. For the first time, the critical question about the status of Copts in modern Egypt as a minority is raised:

How can a minority live in the midst of a majority that oppresses it (Maḥfūz 1992: 1131).

and how this discrimination could be a projection of the lack of freedom in the Egyptian nation:

Today the Copt’s problem is the people’s problem. We are oppressed when everyone else is. When people are free, we are free (Maḥfūz 2011: 1131).

In *al-Sukkariyya*, as well, Maḥfūz forecast the interreligious conflict in Egypt by representing the totalizing view of Islam adopted by Kamāl’s nephew ‘Abd al-Mun‘im:

Let’s prepare ourselves for a prolonged struggle. Our mission is not confined to Egypt but is intended for all Muslims on earth. (Maḥfūz 2011: 295).

As affirmed by Siddiq:

Subsequent historical developments fully bear out the novel’s apocalyptic forecast of interreligious conflict in Egypt (Siddiq 2007:143).

In *al-Marāya* (“Mirrors;” 1971), whose characters are defined by Roger Allen (1973) as “mirrors of contemporary Egyptian society and its values,” Maḥfūz highlights the status of Copts that do not have the same opportunities as their Muslim counterparts in public employment and careers. In a scene of this novel, a Muslim intellectual, ‘Abd al-Wahāb Ismā‘il refuses to give a job opportunity in his magazine to a young writer because he is a Copt (Maḥfūz 1971: 215).

We find the Coptic theme in other writers of Maḥfūz’s generation such as in ‘Iḥsān ‘Abd al-Quddūs (1919-1991), who used this theme in creating a romantic story of impossible love between a Copt man and a Muslim girl as in his short stories; *‘Anā wa al-samā’* (“I and the Sky;” 1948)¹⁹ and *Allah Maḥbbah*

Road take place between 1935, when the Wafd conference was held (at the time it was Muṣṭafā an-Naḥḥās who was the leader of the Wafd), and 1944, which saw the mass arrest of the Muslim Brotherhood.

¹⁹ The fulfilment of their love is hindered by their different religions. In spite of the young man’s conversion to Islam, the girl’s brother refused their marriage. The two lovers commit suicide in the hope that God would bless their love in the afterlife

(“God is Love; 1955)²⁰. In his works he tried to break the taboos of what can be mentioned in literature, albeit he did not treat the status of Copts as a persecuted group.

We find other examples of a realistic and spontaneous incorporation of Coptic figures in novels by Yaḥiya Ḥaqqī (1905-1992) and Yusūf Idrīs (1927-1991). In Ḥaqqī’s *al-Būsṭaḡī* (“The Postman in Blood and Mud”),²¹ he presents the figure of Master Salāma and although he is called a “blue bone” by the other habitants of the village,²² they feel no hatred towards him because he and his wife are very similar to them in manners and customs. We find another realistic representation in *al-Ḥarām* (“Sinners;” 1959) by Yūsuf Idrīs and the representation of the Coptic family of Missīḥa Effendi.²³ Missīḥa Effendi, the chief’s clerk, is portrayed in a humane and spontaneous way. He even forgave her daughter after she ran away from home to marry a Muslim man.

2.3. ‘Abd al-Hakīm Qāsim (the Sixties Generation)

Three decades after the Maḥfūz Trilogy, a short novel (60 pages) entitled *al-Mahdī*²⁴ (“The Rightly Guided One;” 1977)²⁵ by ‘Abd al-Hakīm Qāsi²⁶ (1934-1990), witnesses the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and its influences on Copts’ status in Egypt especially in the countryside. Qāsim belonged to the *Ġīl al-Sattīnāt* (the Sixties’ Generation),²⁷ the generation that supported Nasser in 1952 and gradually became disillusioned with the increasing authoritarian face of the regime. Qāsim, in *al-Mahdī*, explores the

²⁰ To overcome their families’ refusal for their marriage the two lovers decide to marry twice as Muslims and as Copts

²¹ The short novel deals with the traditions and the concept of honour in Upper Egypt and how it does not differ between Muslim and Copts through the story of Ġamīla, the Copt girl who got pregnant after her relationship with Ḥalīl, the young Protestant man who could not marry her because of the difference of religions.

²² “Blue bone” is a term of abuse used in Egypt against Copt Christians and refers to the bruises so many bore on their bodies in the course of history.

²³ The novel is about the difficult position in which poor migrant land-tillers find themselves as strangers in a village to which they are imported by contractors and land owners. They were treated badly by everyone especially after the discovery of a dead new born baby who is a son of one of them.

²⁴ *Mahdī* (“guided one”) in Islamic eschatology, a messianic deliverer who will fill earth with justice and equity, restore true religion, and usher in a short golden age lasting seven, eight, or nine years before the end of the world.

²⁵ The novel was written in Berlin in 1977 and published later in Beirut in 1984.

²⁶ ‘Abd al-Hakīm Qāsim, a prominent member of the generation of writers who made their debut in the 1960s. In January 1974 he was invited to Berlin by the Evangelical Academy and the Institute of Islamic Studies of the Free University to take part in a seminar on Egyptian literature. He stayed in Berlin until 1982. After his return to Cairo, he worked as a freelance journalist.

²⁷ The term of *Ġīl sittīnāt* is used to designate a group associated with literary innovation; most of these authors began writing in the 1960s. Prominent writers include Idwārd al-Kharrat (Idwārd al-Ḥarrāṭ), Ġamāl al-Ġīṭānī, Muḥammad al-Bisāṭī, ‘Abd al-Ḥakīm Qāsim, Bahā’ Ṭāhir, Yaḥiya Ṭāhir ‘Abdullah, Ibrāhīm ‘Aṣlān, Raḍwa ‘Aṣūr and others. See Kendall (2006).

dangerous potential of Islamic fundamentalism and appropriately casts a Copt as its most unfortunate victim. This short novel mirrors the decade of 1970 when the Muslim Brotherhood reinforced their religious tone. The novel takes place in a Delta village and shows how some Brotherhood members forced a poor Copt, an umbrella maker, named 'Awad Allah, to convert to Islam. But on the same day of his conversion, he died in front of the Mosque, so the umbrella maker was sanctified as *al-Mahdī*.

This short novel is described by Meḥrez (1995) as a unique gem in contemporary Arabic literature. In a poignant scene, Qāsim describes the appearance of a group of 'Muslim Brotherhood' members in 'Awad-Allah's life and he emphasizes the power of the Muslim Brotherhood who dominated entire villages in Egypt in the 1970s. They give him a house and some books to convince him to change his religion, using a language register that deliberately recreates religious tones:

Here is God's Book... I hope that you will accept it happily. Talaat holds out a printed book "Qur'an," and Awadallah held out his hands and accepted the Book. Talaat pointed to a marker in the book. We hope you read this part first [...] Awadallah standing where he was, holding the book in his hands, then exhausted, fell on to the bench behind him. [...] Let's leave Awadallah, Fula whispered, let's get out of here, as he is, and the Qur'an was spread over the palm of his palms. She whispered: Let's go, master, let's get out of here
It is too late, Fula, He said ... It is too late (Qāsim 1995: 32/33).

Qāsim's novel provides a good summary of the political and social scene in the 1970s, marked by the Muslim Brotherhood's full control and the rise of religious fervour in the countryside.

According to Siddiq (2007), the more exclusionary discourse of political Islam on the identity of the nation and the place of non-Muslims in the third part of twentieth century, creates a crucial development in the debate on the role of religion in the identity of the nation. While Maḥfūz's treatment of both religion and the status of non-Muslims in Egypt is largely discursive and often polemical in nature, in the writers of the post-Maḥfūz's generation it takes a primary form.

In the literary production of this period, the Coptic theme is present in another three key figures of *Ġīl al-sittīnāt* ("the Sixties Generation"): Bahā' Ṭāhir (b. 1935), Idwārd El-Ḥarāṭ (1926-2015) and Ibrāhīm 'Abd al-Magīd (b. 1946). Their works depict a special friendship between Copts and Muslims. Bahā' Ṭāhir treated harmonious coexistence between Coptic-Christian and Muslims in Egypt in his famous novel *Ḥālatī Ṣafīyya wa al-Dayr*²⁸ ("Aunt Safya and the Monastery;" 1991). Good relations between

²⁸ It is set in a village outside Luxor, narrated in the first person by a boy who is involved in the events but only passively and he narrates a dramatic and horrifying story about Safīyya, his aunt. She was in love with Ḥarbī, a handsome and agreeable young relative but she married Ḥarbī's uncle, the rich bey. When she became pregnant, the bey then developed a paranoid belief

Muslims and Copts and tolerance theme are also at issue in *Turābuha Za‘farān* (“City of Saffron;” 1986)²⁹ by Idwārd El-Ḥarāṭ, and Ibrāhīm ‘Abdal-Mağīd’s *Lā ‘Aḥad yanām fī al-Iskandariyya*³⁰ (“Nobody sleeps in Alexandria;” 1996).

2.4. The generation of the 1990s

The assassination of President Sadat on 6 October 1981 underlined the fundamentalist threat in Egypt. Therefore, the first goal carried out by Mubarak after he took power, was to fight the radical Islamic movement. Although during 1990s, state intelligence and police forces fought the *al-Ġamā‘ah al-Islāmīyah* (Islamic group), they did not succeed in stopping its violent attacks against Copts, regime officials and tourists. During that fight, the national attention was more focused on the threat that the Islamic groups represented to state security³¹ rather than addressing the issue of the Copts in particular. In these years Copts were the target of unprecedented attacks, because as Fahmī Huwaydī (Huwaydī 2000) notes, at that the end of the twentieth century sectarian strife was far worse in Egypt than it had been at its beginning, especially in Upper Egypt.

According to Maggiolini and Meclangi (2020), during the Mubarak era, the government took two main strategies: denial and repression. The denial, expressed in an insensitive way, became rejection of the existence of tensions. The President tried to cement the President’s image as a protector of Muslims and Christians with the “national unity” campaign of the early 1990s, but the claims of the Christians went unheeded.

According to Hafez (2010) and Philipps (2019), the arena of Egyptian literature of the last decade of the twentieth century took a further turn, as the 90s’ generation distanced themselves from collective concerns and focused more on private and isolated experiences and begin to dabble in digital culture.

that Ḥarbī would kidnap and harm the infant. He brought hired thugs to the village to torture Ḥarbī appallingly, but Ḥarbī found refuge in the small monastery of the village.

²⁹ The novel portrays the interactions between the protagonist’s Coptic family and their Muslim neighbours and gives a portrait of positive inter-religious exchanges. Also depicts an alliance between Copts and Muslims in their resistance to British occupation.

³⁰ The first during the Second World War, the second during the 1950s. A primary concern of both novels is to chronicle the devastating effects of external wars and internal strife on the delicate fabric of Alexandria’s cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic, and multi religious society.

³¹ Cf. Maggiolini and Meclangi (2020)

In the portrayal of Copts and Coptic issues it has been a notable development. Novelists start to speak more overtly of sectarianism, which used to be a taboo in Egyptian public culture. From the 2000s on, the frantic reaffirmation of the values of national unity and peaceful coexistence got weaker and they started to focus on the Coptic issue in a realistic way.

Starting from the 2nd millennium, there has been an increase in the quantity of novels that have the theme of Coptic-Christian life, as we mentioned in the introduction. Two of them, in our opinion, deserve to be quoted: *Azāzīl* (2008) by Yūsuf Zaydān (b. 1958) and *Waṣāyā al-Lawḥ al-Maksūr* (“Commandments of the broken tablet;” 2000)³² by Ġabriyāl Zakī (b. 1945). Both underline Coptic experiences in different historical periods in Egypt. *Azāzīl* is set in the fifth century, when Coptic Christianity was new, yet the prevailing religion among the masses. Zaydān discusses the Coptic understanding of Christ and Hypatia’s murder at Alexandria. The novel has been vehemently denounced by several members of the Coptic clergy and by Copts in general. Some personalities in the Coptic Orthodox Church accused Zaydān of *izdirā’ al-dīn al-masīḥī* (“defaming the Christian religion” – a crime in Egyptian law – and fomenting sectarian strife between Muslims and Copts. The second novel is the first one of Ġabriyāl Zakī (b. 1945) and deals with the alienation of the intellectual Copt and his social disintegration in both communities, Copt and Muslim alike.

3. 2011 aftermath

The Revolution 25th January represents a crucial moment in Egyptian history. The Taḥrīr Square demonstrations were a model of sectarian amity, with Muslim and Copts demonstrators protecting each other from the violence of the police and the regime's thugs. Muslims and Copts fought for a liberal and civil cause, showing that they claimed the idea of Egyptian nationality while not refusing their religious identity. Copts finally believed with their Muslim brethren that this Revolution would put an end to the past discrimination between Copts and Muslims and social inequalities. Unfortunately this feeling did not last long and the parliamentary elections of winter 2011–2012 produced a parliament dominated by Islamists with only a few Copt deputies elected. Later on, the election victory of Muhammad Mursī plunged the Coptic community into despair and they started to feel threatened. The promising political initiatives of the transition period vanished and the newly elected president's government was dominated by Muslim brothers and Islamic politicians. Therefore

³² Paul is a married, happy employee, and has a son. His only problem is that he, as a secular member of the Coptic minority, feels alone and defenceless in the Egyptian society.

the anti-Mursī movement, one year after his election as a president, gained steam. Millions of Muslims and Copts were calling for his removal and for new elections.

According to the novelist Ibrāhīm ‘Abdal-Mağīd,³³ it is still too early to identify the Revolution’s features in Egyptian literature. Albeit he underlines that some influences of the 2011 aftermath can be seen in treating taboo themes and the emergence of raw details in depicting real issues.

Youssef (2019) observes, by examining some novels of post-2011,³⁴ that they have in common a sense of popular anguish and uncertainty, or even sheer despair at the older power relations persistently finding their way back into Egyptian political and social patterns. They demonstrate forms of unruly politics and continuous popular protest in their innovative aesthetics with a clear focus on complex minority experiences in Egypt, at the intersections of race, ethno-religion, and gender.

Nevertheless, the bitterness and the disillusionment following 25th January, foster themes that address religious discrimination and social inequalities. We can note more courage in showing characters’ perspectives and dealing overtly with implicit inter-religious prejudices. We can find an example of this in Ḥassan Kamāl’s novel *al-Marḥūm*³⁵ (“The Deceased;” 2014). In a shocking scene, he expresses the contemptuous reaction of ‘Abbās, the chief worker in a morgue when he discovered that the food brought by Mīlād, the Coptic worker, has been cooked by his mother and does not come from a restaurant:

She was my mother, what do you think Uncle Abbas? She can be a professional cook. Abbas with a disgusted face, spat out the morsel and screamed:

You made us eat Christians’ food, Mīlād, you are a dog, may God disgust you and disgrace your mother. Of course she prayed over it and put the priest’s oil, the communion water and the urine of the monk into it (Kamāl 2014: 96).

³³ See the article on <https://www.albayan.ae/books/library-visit/2014-04-04-1.2094655>

³⁴ The novels are *Ġirāfi* (Graffiti) by Hišām al-Ḥašin (2014), *al-Ṭābūr* (“The Queue;” 2013) by Basma abd al-‘Azīz, and *‘Oṭārd* (“Mercury;” 2015) by Muḥammad Rabī’.

³⁵ In *al-Marḥūm* (“The deceased”), a medical student who writes novels is constantly on the lookout for unusual characters for his novels. One day he meets, the morgue worker. The sympathetic young doctor, coming into contact with the disorderly life of the worker, finds himself part of events that lead him to a cruel world where the living are in a permanent struggle, conflicts of religion, power, corruption, politics, poverty and disease.

Other writers demonstrate a peculiar sensibility for the Copts' status and reveal awareness of their situation as in al-'Ašmawāī's *Bārmān*³⁶ through Maryam, the protagonist (Munīr)'s daughter, who remained Christian despite the conversion of her father into Islam in order to marry a Muslim lady. Maryam, who had to hide her religion, seems to symbolize the persecution of a Coptic minority (al-'Ašmawāī 2014: 17).

4. *Bayt al-Qibṭiyya*

Ašraf al-'Ašmawāī (born 1966) is a judge at the Court of Appeal. He debuted in 2010, with the novel *Sarqāt Mašrw'ah* (Legitimate Thefts),³⁷ followed by nine novels³⁸ in a period of less than ten years. The themes treated in his novels reveal the attention he pays to the marginalized classes in Egyptian society. al-'Ašmawāī deals with the problem of Nubians living in Cairo, after their displacement in *Taḍkirat Qitār Wāḥida*³⁹ (No return train ticket). He discusses the problem of Copts in the novel the *Bārmān* ("Barman"). In the novel *Sayyidat al-Zamālik* ("The lady of Zamalek"),⁴⁰ he sheds light on a Jewish family of Italian origin by disrupting the stereotyped image of Jews.

Bayt al-Qibṭiyya ("The house of the Copt woman;" 2019) is his second attempt to approach the problem of Copts and sectarian strife.

4.1. Spatio-temporal settings and plot

The events of the novel take place in an isolated village in Upper Egypt. At the end of the novel, al-'Ašmawāī specifies the exact time of writing, that is on 9 September 2019. From textual evidence we understand that the time of actions is roughly the decade of the 2000s. So between the two times there

³⁶ The novel narrates of Munīr, the barman who changes his religion to marry a Muslim woman. Through his work in a pub in the Zamalek district he comes into contact with influential political and business figures and talks about the period of corruption during the last years of Mubarak's rule.

³⁷ Speaks of unknown pages in the history of the theft, pillage and smuggling of Egyptian antiquities over the past two centuries. deals with the emergence of the legal system in Egypt for the protection of antiquities in the light of the personal experience of the author who collaborated with the Council of Antiquities.

³⁸ *Zamān al-ḡabā'* ("Era of Hyenas;" 2011), *Toyah* (2012), *al-Muršid* ("The Guide;" 2013), *al-Bārmān* (2014), *Kilāb al-Rā'i* ("Dogs' pastor;" 2015), *Taḍkirat Qitār Wāḥida* ("One train ticket;" 2016), *Sayyidat al-Zamālek* ("Zamalek's Lady;" 2018).

³⁹ The novel narrates the story of 'Aḡibah, the nubian who leaves his country in 1940s in search of decent work in Cairo and deals with the displacement of Nubians from their land during 1960s.

⁴⁰ Inspired by the killing of Salomon Cicurel, a Jewish businessman of Italian origin in 1927; from this it takes the cue to talk about the life of Jews and foreigners in Egypt during this period.

lies the period of the last decade of President Mubarak, his deposition and the aftermath of the 2011 Revolution. The principal plot is unravelled by two main characters: Nāder, a young Prosecutor transferred to work in a remote village, who narrates the first chapter and conveys the essential information about him and the place, and Huda, a Copt woman who lives in another village, who narrates in the second chapter her tragic story in a retrospective narration. So we know that her father died when she was young, her mother remarried a Muslim man who was ten years younger, who became attracted by Huda. This attraction was materialized in a rape. The girl's tragedy developed into marriage with a Muslim (a man she despised) only to cover up her shame. At a certain moment the retrospective narration is interrupted with the appearance of her husband. Later on, Huda, in a quarrel hit her husband. Seeing him unconscious on the ground, she thought he had died. From this climax, the events move inexorably forward, and through the two voices we know that Huda escaped from the village and found shelter in Ṭāy'a, the village where Nāder works. There, she started a new life with the possibility of openly showing her religion and married a good Copt. However, the ghost of the past returned, and with a plot twist, we discover that Huda's Muslim husband is still alive, and she is accused of adultery. Hence she went from a good Christian to an ostracized outcast from her church. On the other hand, through Nāder's narration, the reader is introduced into his mind and then subsidiary plots are unraveled like his story with the Cairene fiancé. The novel ends with Hud's tragic death during a childbirth.

The main theme is Huda's tragedy as a victim, on the one hand, of rural society in which patriarchy operates through religious socialization to justify the masculine ill-treatment of women and on the other hand, her status as a Copt, so an outcast of the outcast. Huda epitomises the woman whose life is conditioned by religious sectarianism and her story leads us to another significant theme of the novel: the religious clashes in upper Egypt. The writer introduces other themes like the inadequacy of law, political and moral corruption but without going into them in any depth. The following analysis demonstrates how the author deals with the main themes with an unrelenting commitment to social and political reality, which can be observed by readers who are familiar with the social particularities of upper Egypt and the real political issues in the last two decades in Egypt.

4.2. Narrative strategies

The novel is divided into twenty-five sections, and the events are related through the perspectives of two main voices in the first person: Nāder narrates fourteen sections while Huda narrates eleven. Nāder is also the narrator who inaugurates and concludes the novel. It is worth noting that this is the

second work⁴¹ in which al-‘Ašmāwī experiments the multi-voice technique; his other novels were written through either the omniscient third person narrator or in the first person of the protagonist.

This strategy of “democratization of narration” or polyphony is considered by the American critic Stefan Meyer as one of the innovative modernist strategies introduced into the Arabic novel in the 1960s. In his book *The experimental Arabic novel* (2001), Meyer argues that a number of key Arab writers have been influenced by the translation of William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*, published in Arabic language in 1963 by Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā⁴² and that causing them to break with the traditional realist technique and to substitute multiple narration.

Also Fabio Caini (2007) argues relying on Meyer’s study that not all narrative structures with more than one perspective fulfil all the Bakhtinian criteria for genuine polyphony. He states:

If the method of multiple narration is simply limited to giving the reader different perspectives, it is not enough to fulfil the true tasks of polyphony in Bakhtinian terms. These consist in: (1) a fair and equal representation of the characters’ voices; (2) dialogism (as opposed to the monologism of the traditional novel), which, according to Bakhtin, is the only way to achieve this (Caini 2007: 53).

If we apply Meyer and Caini’s approach, we find Nāder’s voice emerges as the dominant one. Huda’s voice seems to highlight Nāder’s ideas. We do not notice any alteration of linguistic registers. Hence Huda the simple naïve girl has the same linguistic registers of the cultivated prosecutor and also the other characters as we will see in the second point. For example, Huda in an interior monologue expresses her misfortunes and miserable conditions:

لم أعد استطيع العيش في الظل، حياتي كلها على هامش السعادة والإستقرار، هاربة دائما من أشباح كثيرة، فقر وظلم وقهر واضطهاد وهي لا تتوانى عن مطاردتي وتلحق بي دوما، [...] هل لو انقلبت حجرا صلدا بلا مشاعر لكان حالي افضل ولنعمت بالأستقرار؟

I can no longer live on the edge of life, my whole life on the edge of happiness and stability, always on the run from so many ghosts, poverty, injustice, oppression and persecution, which always follow me [...] I would like to be a hard stone without feelings, Would I have been better and enjoyed the stability?⁴³ (al-‘Ašmāwī 2019: 223).

⁴¹ He starts to use this technique in *Sayyidat al-Zamālik* (“Zamalek’s Lady,” 2018).

⁴² Translated as *al-ṣaḥab wa l-‘unf*.

⁴³ All the translations of the quotations from the novel are by the author.

Nāder, in a similar interior monologue, expresses his feeling of frustrations and disillusionment with socio-political situation in his country and his failure to change nothing:

قهر واقعي احلامي وبخرها، دائما الواقع يغلب الحلم، يستعيد حقوقه منها ، لا يترك الأحلام تحجبه زما طويلا. أحيانا بعض الأمور تتجاوزني، تتعدى قدراتي ، لن يفيدني مقاومتها أكثر من طاقتي ، وأحيانا يكون استمرار في المقاومة مؤديا للهلاك.

life made my dreams vanish. Reality always defeats the dream. It does not accept being overcome by dreams. Sometimes I feel powerless in front of the facts of reality, resisting them will not benefit me and they overcome my energy, and other times my continuing resistance will lead to perdition (al-‘Ašmāwī 2019: 231).

There are various characters in the background like the two guardians of the guesthouse and Huda’s two husbands. These are only sketched briefly and mainly serve to either highlight the thoughts of the main characters or as a general contribution to the atmosphere. They are introduced in the novel without almost no language varieties in their speech. One in particular (al-Nabawī), though mentioned with few appearances, deserves our attention: through a few words, without any details, we understand that he changed his religion from Muslim to Christian to escape from the *ṭaa’r* (vengeance). Yet he failed to escape for a long time and he was shot dead by his enemies. The passage that describes his murder is quite poignant:

نبوي الذي ينزف من صدره وفمه وساقه، لا يزال ممسكا ببندقيته ، باليد ذاتها التي تحمل صليبا مدقوقا على رسغها[...]. مال رأسه على كتفه، واغمض عينيه [...] بعدما نطق الشهادتين بصعوبة

al-Nabawī was bleeding from his chest, mouth, and leg, still holding his rifle with the same hand that bore a cross tattoo on his wrist[...] He tilted his head on the shoulder and closed his eyes,[...] after that he recited the *al-šahāda*⁴⁴ with a lot of effort (al-‘Ašmāwī 2019: 188).

⁴⁴ In the religious use of the word, *šahāda* is the Muslim profession of faith: “there is no god but God; Muḥammad is the Prophet of God.”

Another writer's strategy is intertextuality, as we can see from the first pages of the novel, al-'Ašmāwī reminds us of two famous works of Tawfīq al-Hakīm: *Yawmiyyāt nā'ib fī al-aryāf* ("Maze of Justice: Diary of a Deputy Prosecutor in the Country;" 1937)⁴⁵ and *'Adāla wa Fann* ("Justice and Art;" 1953).⁴⁶

بالكاد لمحت كتابين مختلفين ، محشورين وسط الكتب الضخمة، سمكهما لا يشي بانتمائهما للقانون [...] الكتابان لتوفيق الحكيم روايته الشهيرة "يوميات نائب في الأرياف"، وثانيهما كتابه الذي لم يلفت إليه كثيرون وقت صدوره.. "عدالة وفن".

I hardly notice two different books hidden by other huge books, their thickness does not indicate that they are law books [...] The two books are by Tawfīq al-Hakīm, his famous novel *Yawmiyyāt nā'ib fī al-aryāf*, and the second is his book, to which many readers paid no attention at the time of its publication *'Adāla wa Fann* (al-'Ašmāwī 2019: 10).

In another passage he makes another reference to al-Hakīm:

لكني لمحت رجلا غريبا واقفا قرب الأستراحة، بدينا وطويلا في آن واحد، يرتدي معطفا داكنا فوق جلبابه، يحمل على كتفه بندقية كبيرة، اللافت فيه طربوشه الأحمر الذي يخفي غالبية ملامحه من فرط كبسه على جبهته كأنه خرج لتوه من صفحات رواية توفيق الحكيم.

I noticed a strange man standing near the house. He was obese and tall at the same time, wearing a dark coat over his robes, carrying a large rifle on his shoulder, the striking way in which his red fez hides most of his features from his excessive clenching of his forehead as if he had just emerged from the pages of Tawfīq al-Hakīm's novel (al-'Ašmāwī 2019: 50).

Gerard (1982: 2) refers to Riffaterre's definition of intertextuality as:

It is the perception of the reader of the relationship between a work and others that have either preceded or followed it.

Or:

the corpus of texts the reader may legitimately connect with the one before his eyes, that is, the texts brought to mind by what he is reading (Riffaterre 1980a: 626).

⁴⁵ First translation in English published in 1947. It is a partially autobiographic short novel. The narrator is a cynical, overworked district Prosecutor assigned to a small Egyptian village. He spends his days investigating the petty crimes committed by the locals, listlessly attending innumerable and interminable court sessions and shuffling through endless legal dossiers while his solitary evenings are spent with his sole companion and refuge – his journal. The novel takes the form of his journal entries. Eleven entries frame the time of the novel, narrating eleven consecutive days of his life, which focus on the mysterious circumstances surrounding the murder of a local peasant (cf. Selim 2004).

⁴⁶ Collection of short stories mainly about Egyptian courts.

Taking into account this definition, we can notice the similarity of al-‘Ašmāwī’s novel and al-Ḥakīm’s masterpiece. *Yawmiyyāt* describes al-Ḥakīm’s experience as a Prosecutor in a remote village between 1929 and 1934 and portrays the positive and negative aspects of the Egyptian judicial system. The work offers an accurate portrait of the *fallāḥīn*’s (“peasants”) miserable life. The same experience appears in al-Ašmāwī’s work. The two novels have a rural settings, both heroes are young Prosecutors who have been transferred to work in a remote village and both have to deal with crimes without finding the culprits. al-Ašmāwī has several topics in common with *Yawmiyyāt* al-Ḥakīm such as the manipulation of law by corrupt and inefficient bureaucratic hierarchy, the falsification of electoral results by police commissioner, and the application of legal articles to the dead letter upon an illiterate community. More than one scene is borrowed in al-Ašmāwī’s work. One scene that is almost identical in both novels is the detailed autopsy of a gunshot victim, as we find in al-‘Ašmāwī (2019: 98) and al-Ḥakīm (1937: 121). In an interview published in al-‘Ayn⁴⁷ magazine, al-‘Ašmāwī said that he mentioned al-Ḥakīm and his books in order to honour this great Egyptian writer. He felt that they were sharing the same experience of work and he wanted to shed light on the fact that the battle against corruption, inefficiency, and diseases of the Egyptian judicial system just as al-Ḥakīm had done in his *Yawmiyyāt*, as nothing had changed almost one hundred years later. So we can say that al-Ašmāwī reworks concepts and literary tropes from al-Ḥakīm to shape his new text.

Comparing the linguistic registers used by the two writers, we find al-Ḥakīm’s protagonists were introduced to the readers in their unadulterated voices. According to Selim (2004), this introduction of ‘realistic’ peasant voices creates a discursive challenge to the canonical languages of authority and produces a rupture in the text dominated by the monologue voice of the subject. Their language forms a clear juxtaposition for the precise cultured language of the hero. The case in al-‘Ašmāwī is different.

The Novel is written in standard Arabic with few spoken idioms in dialogues. It is remarkable that there is not very great distinction between narration and dialogues. al-‘Ašmāwī does not make any attempt to liven up the dialogues with specific words of upper Egypt’s vernacular.⁴⁸ He even uses the Cairene vernacular in dialogues instead of the protagonists’ natural one.⁴⁹

As we notice in the dialogue between Ramsīs Isakndar and Huda:

انا رمسيس اسكندر حاجب استراحة المحكمة .. اسمك ايه وجاية منين يا بنتي؟
ابوس ايدك ابات عندك للصبح ، انا غريبة والناس في الجامع طردوني

⁴⁷ <https://al-ain.com/article/ashraf-al-ashmawy-interview>

⁴⁸ It is a Southern variety of Egyptian Arabic spoken by the inhabitants of Nile Valley. Cf. Khalafallah (1969).

⁴⁹ Cf. Taymūr (2002).

“I am Ramsīs Iskandar, guardian of the court’s guesthouse, what is your name, where are you from, girl?”

“Please, I beg you to let me spend the night here, I am a stranger and the people in the mosque kicked me out” (al-‘Ašmāwī 2019: 42).

Nor is there any distinction between illiterate or semi-illiterate and educated protagonists in their speaking register as we can see in the expressions of Rizq, the semi-illiterate electrician who uses register of *‘āmmiyat al-muṭaqqafīn* (“well-educated people”):

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“Absolutely normal, the news has been disclosed” (al-‘Ašmāwī 2019: 82).

In the novel there are various passages in which the linguistic level is not adequate for the literacy of the interlocutor as we find in the sentence of Nabawī the guardian who supposed to be illiterate but he speaks with *‘āmmiyat al-muṭaqqafīn* (well-educated people)

الزيارات الشخصية ممنوعة هنا بأمر من نادر بيه وكيل النيابة

“Personal visits are prohibited here as per order by Nader Bey, the prosecutor”

(al-‘Ašmāwī 2019: 152).

In another passage the Copt woman uses an expression from the Qur’ān *maṭl’a al- Faḡr* (97: 5):

سرت على اطراف أصابعي كي لا أوقظه بعدما سهرنا ننهل من عسل بعضنا حتى مطلع الفجر

“I walked on the tips of my fingers so as not to wake him up after we stayed up late, drinking each other's love until the break of dawn” (al-‘Ašmāwī 2019: 87).

4.3. The oppression of the Copt women and religious sectarianism

In the twentieth-century Arab literary tradition, the woman as a historical metaphor is most commonly represented through the allegory of mother/earth/country. Against this backdrop, Egyptian novelists such as Haykal, al-Ḥakīm, Maḥfūz used to construct woman as a metaphor of the nation. We find the same thing in al-‘Ašmāwī’s protagonist. Huda is a symbol of the difficult present of Egypt under the domain of fundamentalism and her situation mirrors Egypt’s religious and legal conflicts, especially in the Egyptian Coptic community. In some of the novel’s passages we can perceive an implicit causal relationship between Huda’s tragedy and the Islamic law in Egypt. Applying the *Shari’a* when she asked for a divorce from her husband sealed off all her chances to free herself of a cruel man. She found

herself in a trap because she had married a Muslim without embracing his religion and her rights were not admitted either by Islamic or Coptic law:

أصر وقتها القاضي بعد عام كامل من نظر القضية على بقائي مع خضر، حذرني في آخر جلسة من مغبة الطلاق [...] يصر على تطبيق شريعة خضر كما امره القانون المكتوب وهو يعلم أنني قبطية [...] نطق الحكم باستمرار موتي.. بوأد أنوثتي.. باغتيال إنسانيتي.. رفض دعوى التطلاق.

That time, the judge handed down the sentence, after a full year of hearing, which forced me to remain Hader's wife. In the last session he had warned me of the consequences of the divorce, [...] he insisted on applying Hader's law as required by law even though he knew full well that I was a Copt [...] He issued my death sentence, a burial of my femininity and the assassination of my humanity. He refused my request for divorce (al-'Ašmāwī 2019: 122)

In the following passage, we cannot fail to hear the echoes of the heated debate over the amendment of article two of the Egyptian Constitution:⁵⁰

تبقى السؤال عالماً في ذاكرتي، إذا كان الله ترك لنا حرية العقيدة، فلماذا يلزمنا بها البشر في الزواج والطلاق؟!
the question is, if God has left us freedom of belief, then why should human beings involve religion in divorce and marriage? (al-'Ašmāwī 2019: 123)

The writer demonstrates the domestic violence that Huda underwent and how her first husband was beating her without mercy:

لحقتني قرب الفرن قبل أن أدور حوله، جذبني من طرحتي، طرحني بسهولة، تمكن مني مثل دميمة صغيرة، انهال علي صفعاً ركلني في بطني [...] فالمكواة الحديد ستكون في يديه بعد برهة، يحميها ليكوي جسدي.

he had joined me near the oven before turning me round, he pulled me from the head dress, he threw me on the ground like a puppet, he started hitting my face [...] and kicking me in the belly [...] then he will heat the iron to burn my body (al-'Ašmāwī 2019: 16).

The novel links religious fundamentalism and the oppression of women. al-'Ašmāwī suggests that the religious practices of fundamentalists sanction the mistreatment of women especially in the case of

⁵⁰ Sadat initiated a constitutional change in 1971 that stipulated that Islamic Shari'a should be "a principal source of legislation" (*maṣḍar ra'īs li-t-tašrīf*). In 1980, Article Two of the Constitution was changed again to declare Sharia "the main source of legislation" (*al-maṣḍar ar-ra'īs li-t-tašrīf*). Soon after the 25th Revolution it has been a referendum on the abolition of this article but due to Islamic domain it didn't pass.

Coptic women. As in the dialogue between the servant of the mosque, where Huda planned to spend the night when she escaped, and his colleague, when the former was planning to rape her:

ما هو ليل ونهار يقول لنا النصارى كفره ونسوانهم حلال وحرام نعيد عليهم

But he is telling us day and night that Christians are infidels, and their women are permissible and he forbade us from giving them any greetings (al-'Ašmāwī 2019: 31).

The author gives us a clear portrayal of his perceptions of the Coptic frustration in Egypt in the story of Huda: the men who victimized her and treated her as an object of sex and a tool for reproduction are both Muslims: the stepfather raped her, to quench his sexual desires that his wife was no longer able to match, and the brutal cruel husband who used to project his frustration and complex of inferiority on to her. Huda accepts her destiny and did not rebel until the moment he was about to kill her. The author, through a juxtaposition, illustrates the difference between Huda's Muslim ex-husband and the new Coptic one (Rizq) who is an affectionate and good person:

خضر شوه روعي، أطلق رصاصات الأسي صوبها بلا هوادة بعدما أضرم فيها نيران الإهانة.. بدد أحلي سنوات عمري.. بعثر أحلامي، [...] أحرق حبي لنفسي، وخنق مشاعري[...] لكن رزق احتواني رغم مخاوفي منه كرجل في البداية، تمنعت وتبيست أطرافي كلما اقترب مني، بكيت.. ارتعشت.. فطمأنني بوقوفه على مسافة أمنة مني، ابتعدت متذكرة زوج أمي وخضر من بعده.. فربت رزق رأسي وقبل يدي، ثم منحني نفحة من روحه لأحيا بها وعليها

Ḥaḍr distorted my soul, shot the bullets of pain incessantly after setting them on fire, destroying the sweetest years of my life. .. dispersing my dreams,[..] he killed my self-love, stifling my feelings [...] But Rizq gave me tenderness, despite my fears of him in the beginning. I avoided him every time he came closer, I cried ... trembled ... but he reassured me from a safe distance. I stood far away because, I remembered my stepfather and Ḥaḍr. Rizq touched my head gently, he kissed my hand, then he gave me a breath of his soul to live again and again (al-'Ašmāwī 2019: 75).

The author points out that the concept of honour in Upper Egypt does not differ between Muslim and Copts. And how the inviolability of religious commandments are condemned from both communities, as it can be seen by describing the attitude of the villages' inhabitants towards Huda after discovering her true story:

الكل بات كارها لها، وربما يقتلها أحدهم دفاعا عن الدين كما يظنون. صارت مثل الأجرّب[...] لكنها أصبحت دجالة.. زانية والآن كافرة

Now she is hated by everyone, maybe someone could kill her in defence of religion as they believe. She has become like a scabious woman [...] She became adulterous and infidel (al-'Ašmāwī 2019: 216).

The penultimate chapter gives us a light of hope as the Judge condemned Huda with a light penalty for the accusation of adultery, but Huda's death happened in a tragic way because Muslim and Copt villagers refused to donate their blood to save her life. Her death highlights the cruelty of Egyptian society and the loss of hope to change reality:

البقية في حياتك يا باشا.. الست هدى تعيش أنت.

سمرتني كلماته في مكاني، ليسترسل بعينين دامعتين شارحا كيف ماتت بعد الولادة بالمستشفى، بعدما نزفت كثيرا ولم يجدوا من يتبرع لها بالدم من المسلمين او المسيحيين.

Condolences sir....Mrs. Huda has passed away. His words nailed my feet to the ground, while crying, he explained how she died after giving birth in the hospital, after having heavy bleeding and no blood donor could be found (al-'Ašmāwī 2019: 230).

The tragedy of Huda continues after her death with her two babies claimed both by Muslims and Copts:

جابت ولدين تؤم يا باشا .. ووصتني أسميهم "نادر" و"كمال". لكن المستشفى رفضت تسجيل اسم الأب لأن خضر رافع قضية عليها ويقول إن العيال عياله.

She gave birth to twin boys and asked me to give them the names of Nāder and Kamāl but the hospital refused to register the father's name in the population registry because Ḥaḍer says they are his children (al-'Ašmāwī 2019: 231).

That open ending makes Huda's tragedy a personification of continuity. Nothing is able to stop oppression of women or discrimination of Copts.

4.4. Upper Egypt and clashes between Muslims and Copts

The author's choice of that remote village in upper Egypt to contextualise the clashes between Muslims and Copts is not an accident. Clashes between Muslims and Copts have grown increasingly common in recent years, especially in Upper Egypt, where there is a large Christian population and a strong culture of vendetta killings. From the first pages, al-'Ašmāwī puts his finger on the beginning of tensions between Copts and the State, explaining how Nasser's land reform hit Copts very hard; due to the President's nationalism policy, a large portion of Coptic land was confiscated and redistributed to Muslims⁵¹. Copts expressed their disdain sarcastically by altering the village's name in order to give it a negative meaning on purpose:

⁵¹ Cf. Girgis (2018).

وكيف سميت القرية بالطبيعة نسبة إلى محمد طابع عمدتها آنذاك لكنهم من وقتها يصرون علي يبدو أنها نكاية في عائلة العمدة محمد طابع الذي يروي عنه تأييده للثورة التي نكلت بالأهالي "التايهة" نطقها الأقباط من أصحاب الفدادين الكثيرة.

The village was called *Tāy'a* "obedience," following the name of Muḥammad *Tāy'*, its Mayor at that time, but the villagers, out of spite, insist on pronouncing it *Dāy'a* "(Lost)."⁵² They do that because the Mayor Muḥammad *Tāy'* had given his support to the Revolution that deprived the Coptic people of many acres of land (al-'Ašmāwī 2019: 19).

These historical facts, unprecedentedly overtly treated, give a contextual flavour to the novel and keep it close to the political and social reality of the time.

The author suggests that there are other important ingredients to sectarian violence more than the machination of Islamic groups, especially in Upper Egypt. We can perceive how religious violence sometimes disguised economic struggles from a conversation between Nāder and Radwān, a Muslim landlord in conflict with a Coptic family:

عاوز حقي وحق ناسي.. عاوز أحمي أرضي وطيني، عاوز حقوقي من ولاد ببشوي

I want my land and property and I must defend my possessions from the sons of Bīšwāī
(al-'Ašmāwī 2019: 35)

In a song by Ramsīs, the guardian of the guesthouse, the writer sheds light on the situation of disintegration and integration of the Copts in Egypt. On the one hand they do not feel they have equal rights with their Muslim brethren, on the other hand they manifest their loyalty to the regime. Although Ramsīs was indignant about Nasser's land reform, he was singing a ditty celebrating Nasser:

شجرة محمد علي كبرت .. قطعها جمال
رقتي كانت سمسة.. رفعها جمال

the tall tree of Moḥammad 'Alī was cut down by Gamāl
Gamāl has restored my dignity (al-'Ašmāwī 2019: 22).

That could allude to the so-called "Millet Partnership"⁵³ between Nāsser and Patriarch Kīrollos VI, elected in 1959 which established mutual collaboration between regime and Church.

The temporal setting of the story is not specified but some events like the elections with the participation of the Muslim Brotherhood, lead us to conclude that the episodes took place in 2000s. In

⁵² Replacing the letter *ṭ* with the letter *ḍ* to change the meaning of the word in the Egyptian dialect.

⁵³ Cf. Elsasser (2014: 80-81).

these elections, the main victor of the opposition parties was the Muslim Brotherhood movement, which introduced 88 representatives into the People's Assembly by the end of 2005, five times the number of its representatives in the outgoing Parliament (Yoram 2006):

يتنافس على الأصوات بلجنتي مرشحان، أولهما تابع للحزب الوطني برمز الهلال والثاني مرشح جماعة الإخوان المسلمين لكنه لا يعلن ذلك صراحة، مكتفياً بصورته على اللافتات بلحية خفيفة وبدلة أنيقة [...] معتمداً على النجاح الذي حققه إخوانه بالمرحلة الأولى ببعض محافظات الدلتا، وما قاله بالمؤتمر الانتخابي الذي عقد بساحة صغيرة أمام الكنيسة الكبيرة مؤكداً على دعمه للأقباط مثل المسلمين.

Two candidates are competing for votes, the first is affiliated with the National Party with the symbol of the Crescent moon and the second is the candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood, but he does not explicitly declare this, contenting himself with his picture on the banners with a sparse beard and an elegant suit. Relying on the success achieved by his comrades in the first elections' phase in some Delta governorates, and on his declarations during the conference held in the small square in front of the big church, he reiterated his support to both Copts and Muslims (al-'Ašmāwī 2019: 112).

The narrator seizes the opportunity of the election to shed light on the Muslim Brotherhood's full social control in Egyptian villages which foreshadows their domination of the 2011 parliamentary election and victory in the 2012 presidential election:

عندي ثلاثة أصوات فقط، صوتوا كلهم لمرشح الإخوان

There are only three votes, they all voted for the Muslim Brotherhood's candidate (al-'Ašmāwī 2019: 116).

al-'Ašmāwī describes in lively scenes with the "camera's eye technique" the outbreak of clashes between Copts and Muslims, in the village's market (*sūq*) in an explicit reference to the al-Kuṣṣā massacre of December, 31, 1999-2000, which resulted in the destruction of homes, shops and the murder of twenty-one people (19 Copts and two Muslims) as indicated in the novel with "many Copts and two Muslims." In al-Kuṣṣā, riots broke out in the market after a discussion on buying a piece of fabric in very similar if not identical circumstances to the version narrated by Huda when she went to the market to buy a piece of fabric as a present for Rizq:

فقررت الذهاب إلى السوق لأشتري له هدية [...] سأشتري قطعة قماش جديدة، أفصلها جلباباً له

I decided to go to the market to buy a gift for him [...] a piece of fabric and I'll make him a new *ḡalabiyya* (al-'Ašmāwī 2019: 157).

Starting from the brawl in the village market, on several pages, he introduces the reader to the scene of a sort of guerrilla warfare using a sword, a symbol of terror and the Islamic State. He is telling the

story of these clashes in a manner which is detailed, precise “alive,”⁵⁴ so we are able to witness horrific events and feel the tension of life in the village:

تحول السوق في أقل من دقيقة إلى ساحة معركة، رجال تهرول من الجانبين، آخرون يتضاربون بالعصى.
In less than a minute, the market turned into a battlefield, men running from both sides, others clashing with cops [...] (al-‘Ašmāwī 2019: 89).

لم تكن ندري أن في أحد منعطفاتها يكمن سياف متلحفا بالعتمة، فلم نلمح سوى نصل سيفه اللامع وهو يخترق جدار التوك توك الجلدي، لتصرخ فريال من الألم وهي تمسك بجنبها والدماء تندفع منه
We did not know that in one of its corners there was a man wrapped in darkness. We only glimpsed the blade of his bright sword as it ripped the leather cover of a tuk-tuk. Faryal was screaming of pain, while she was holding her side and the blood was bursting from it (al-‘Ašmāwī 2019: 173).

The relentless amassing of brutal details, and depiction of horror, we witness here is intended to involve the reader more and more in the novel’s actions:

كانوا يهتفون ضدنا ويحرقون صلبانا خشبية، [...] علمنا من رمسيس أن أحدهم أضرم النار في المبنى الجديد الملاصق للكنيسة عن طريق إلقاء كرات النار من خارج السور.
They screamed at us and burned wooden crosses. [...] We learned from Ramsīs that someone set fire to the new building adjacent to the church by throwing fireballs from outside the wall (al-‘Ašmāwī 2019: 84).

With these vivid scenes, the author is engaging the reader by focus on their emotional involvement. As Booth states:

Every literary work of any power, whether or not it’s author composed it with his audience in mind is in fact an elaborate system of controls over the readers involvement and detachment along various lines of interest. The author is limited only by the range of human interests (Booth 1982: 123).

In order to assert our perception, al-‘Ašmāwī relates through Nāder that the village’s name has been changed to al-Salām (al-‘Ašmāwī 2019:234) exactly as happened in the case of al-Kuṣṣḥ.

In another poignant scene, al-‘Ašmāwī describes the murder of fourteen Copts in a sectarian riot in an another explicit reference to the massacre of Abū Qurqās 1990 in Minyā:

⁵⁴ Phrase borrowed from Genette (1972: 164).

وصلنا منطقة الزراعات الشرقية، هبطنا من الطريق المرتفع لأحد الغيطان الذي شهد حرق أربعة عشر قبطيا دفعة واحدة ، افهمنا الطبيب الذي التقانا هناك أنهم قتلوا بالرصاص ثم نقلوا إلى هنا تمهيدا لمحرقة كبيرة فيما يبدو، ولولا أن الريح هادئة لتفحمت الجثث كلها، وما أمكن التعرف عليهم أبدا.

we have reached the eastern parts of a cultivated land. We went down to a patch of land where we found fourteen Copts burned. The doctor we met there explained to us that they were first shot and then transferred to be burned. Thanks to the calm wind they were not completely burnt away and we were able to identify them (al-‘Ašmāwī 2019: 200).

The author depicts a sensitive topic, when he reveals the mutual resentment between Copts and Muslims in Upper Egypt expressed by some religious men, either explicitly as in the case of the Sheikh of the Mosque:

وددت كل جمعة أن اسد أذني فلا أسمع الدعاء على أهلي .. لكنني فشلت، لايتركوننا في حالنا، هزرت رأسي يأسا وتقبلا للأمر الواقع، فبعضنا أيضا يقول في كنائسنا عنهم مثل الذي يقولونه عنا، ولكننا لا نجرؤء على الجهر مثلهم.

Every Friday I would have liked to close my ears so as not to hear the gossip about my community, They won't leave us alone. I shake my head in despair and accept the status quo. Some of us even talk badly of them in our churches, but we don't dare to speak openly like them (al-‘Ašmāwī 2019: 61).

or implicitly when the priest almost prevents the Copts, after a violent episode of clashing with a group of islamic fundamentalists, from telling about the help they received from some Muslims:

القبطي الذي أرى مسلما ومات معه، دفعت بعضنا لحكي قصصا مؤثرة عن مسلمين أنقذوهم لما علقوا بأسطح بيوتهم [..] لكن أبانا اسطفانوس لم يعطهم الفرصة ليسترسلوا في تلك الحكايات وقطم حديثهم

The story of the Copt who hosted a Muslim and died with him pushed some of us to tell touching stories about Muslims who saved Copts when they took shelter on the roofs of their homes. But father Ištāfanus stopped their conversations. (al-‘Ašmāwī 2019: 178).

The Coptic issues dominate the novel, and although the present of Coptic expressions are rare, we can point out some oath expressions such as *wa-l-Masīḥ al-ḥaī* (“Christ-alive”) or religious invocations like *waḥiyāt Satinā al-‘Adrā* (“Blessing of Virgin Mary”).⁵⁵ He doesn't mention even once expressions which usually specify Copts in rural areas like *bi-smi Ṣalīb* (“in the name of the Cross”) or *bi-smi l-Masīḥ* (“in the name of Christ”), expressions that pious Copts would say in their daily life. The same goes for forms of greetings, Coptic rituals and festivities. For example, he mentions only once *al-ṣalawāt al-saba'* (“seven prayers”) but during the story time, that lasts for almost one year, he never speaks of any festivities. This lack of attention to religious formulae and traditions, give the image of an unnatural environment in the novel.

⁵⁵ According to the pronunciation in Egyptian Arabic.

The Cross could be the concrete reference of the Christian religion in the novel; he deals with the symbol of the Cross in two cases: as a symbol of identity and as a unifying factor as in case of the tattoo of the Cross:

فتح لي رجل أشيب مندهش، ظل يحملق في وجهي دون أن ينطق، خيل لي أنني لمحت صليبا مدقوقا على
رسغ يده التي يرفع بها المصباح، زفرت بعمق وابتسمت ابتساماة رضا

A grizzled man opened the door, surprised. He glanced at me without uttering. It seemed to me that I had glimpsed a Cross on his wrist while he raised the lamp. I exhaled deeply and smiled with a smile of satisfaction (al-‘Ašmāwī 2019: 42).

The same symbol of the Cross is turned into a stigma when they used it to signal the Copts’ houses:

صحونا ذات يوم لنجد أحدهم قد رسم صليبا أسود كبيرا على باب داري، ربما ليميزها عن بيوت المسلمين
التي قبلي

We woke up one day to find someone who had drawn a large black Cross on the door of my house, perhaps to distinguish it from the houses of the Muslims beside mine (al-‘Ašmāwī 2019: 62).

We do see mutual cooperation between Muslims and Copts in very few episodes, but even in those examples the religious dichotomy is very clear and highlighted by the use of the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘them.’

The author, through the narrator, leaves the reader with no doubt concerning his personal reaction to all this and represents the cultivated and alienated young Egyptian intellectual in an uneasy state of rebellion against a society:

كرهت تساؤلاني وهزرت رأسي أسفا على حالنا، كل شيء هنا انفعالي.. مؤقت.. قصير الأجل، لاشيء يتراكم
ويتعاضم عندنا على السطح إلا غبار الفتنة.

I dismissed my questions and shook my head sadly at our condition: everything here is a temporary short-term emotion, nothing accumulates and grows on the surface except the dust of religious discrimination (al-‘Ašmāwī 2019: 234).

4. Final remarks

A brief comparison between al-‘Ašmāwī’s novel and the other writers who deal with discrimination of Copts or clashes between Copts and Muslims, illustrates that their attention to these issues practically fades in comparison with *Bayt al-Qibṭiyya*. The oppression of Copts permeates almost all the novel and without doubt, this unprecedentedly overt treatment of religious strife riots in a novel deserves attention.

The Coptic theme and discriminations of the Coptic minority is in the foreground in the novel and the narrator utilizes historical facts and real incidents. Albeit, the near total absence of mirroring any linguistic particularity of *ša'īdī* (upper Egypt) dialect and the weak representation of the daily experiences of ordinary Copts diminish the novel's authenticity and give the image of an unnatural environment for novel's actions.

It is important to note that al-'Ašmāwī's novel is receiving a considerable attention from the public and critics, reaching its 11th edition in a few months. Recently it was shortlisted for the Sawiras Prize. It has also obtained 1238 reviews of "goodreads"⁵⁶ and several reviews via Youtube.

Best sellers in Egypt and in the Arab world in general are a recent phenomenon (Allen 2009: 10). Recently publishers have been trying to increase their commercial profiles and including on their staff a marketing manager to follow books after publication. Rooke (2011: 204-205) explains the secret behind the success of some books in the Arab World and their emergence as a bestseller and he considers three factors :

What is the secret behind the accomplishment of these books? The answer, I would suggest, is to be found in a combination of literary factors intrinsic to the texts and external technical and social developments impacting on the conditions of Arabic fiction in general. I believe the following factors to be central: 1) controversiality, 2) accessibility and appeal, 3) physical availability and 4) globalization

If we apply these factors to Bayt al-Qibṭiyya, we will find evidence of the interaction of the reception of this novel and the socio-cultural context in Egyptian society after the political failure of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt in 2013.

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⁵⁶<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/53139508>

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Towards a Less Subjective Model of Singability Analysis Investigating the Persian Translation of Dubbed Songs in Animated Movies

Maryam Golchinnezhad and Mahmoud Afrouz

Song Translation as a relevant area to Translation Studies has been receiving much attention over the past decade. As Song Translation grows, so does the urge to develop a resourceful model to assist researchers in this domain, to study and understand translated songs and hopefully propose solutions to tackle some issues regarding translating a song that would be performable and singable. The two most common models to analyze the singability of translated songs were proposed by Low (2003; 2008) and Franzon (2008). These two models are compatible; therefore, in the current study, they have been merged and adjusted to analyze the Persian translations of dubbed songs. In doing so, attempts have been made to fabricate a less subjective model by developing a marking system. The recommended model was verified by applying it to twenty-five songs selected from five animated movies, namely *Trolls* (2016), *Sing* (2016), *Moana* (2016), *Coco* (2017), and *Smallfoot* (2018).

Keywords: Audiovisual Translation, Song Translation, Persian Dubbing, Singability

1. Introduction

Song Translation Research has been prompted by studies on “literary translation, poetry translation, stage translation, and screen translation” (Bosseaux 2011: 1). Song Translation is not only restricted to free-standing songs, sometimes songs constitute some segments in movies, because they might be original soundtracks (OST) narrating a part of the plot (Tobing and Laksman-Huntley 2017); hence it is of paramount importance to translate the songs alongside dialogues. This venture is not merely about rendering the lyrics, but creating a translation that would match the original music as well; therefore, “a clever illusion must be created, as the TT must give the overall impression that the music has been devised to fit it” (Bosseaux 2011: 4).

Over the last three decades, studies on Song Translation have been growing in number, and opera translation studies had outnumbered other types while pop song translation and musical translation were the least explored ones (Jiménez 2017). A possible proposition to study song translation is the

implication of singability models. There are some well-known models in this regard proposed by Low (2003; 2008) and Franzon (2008). Khoshsaligheh and Ameri (2016) combined these models by disregarding the overlaps and adding the element of lip-synchronization to study the translation of dubbed songs from English into Persian. As a pioneering study in exploring Persian dubbed songs, the combined model they proposed opened a window to many exciting possibilities. However, the issue of subjectivity on the part of the researcher still remains. Consequently, in this study, efforts were made to present a *less subjective*¹ singability model as a means to investigate the Persian translations of songs in dubbed animated movies.

2. Literature Review

Previous studies on Song Translation have been dedicated to different aspects of this area such as reception of translated songs, restrictions of translating songs, strategies used in translating them, and appropriate models or frameworks for studying translations, also known as ‘singability models’. In the current section, some studies pertaining to these issues are cited. In the last two subsections 2.1. and 2.2., the most common singability models are highlighted.

One of the first reception studies on Song Translation was conducted in 2008. Di Giovanni (2008) explored the reception of Italian translations of fifteen American film musicals with an emphasis on the visibility and invisibility of the translators. She explained the specificities of the language by introducing three concepts: the musical number (the number of songs, dances and duets), star persona (the role film stars play in conveying the language of the musical), and duality (an influential component on the other two that expresses two different characters, two different worlds, etc.). Then she examined the reception of the Italian version by considering the strategies that translators employed both on the macro and micro levels. The major strategies adopted on the macro level in translation of musicals in Italy are dubbing, subtitling, mixed translation, and partial translation. However, the only concern of her study was the fully dubbed versions.

Di Giovanni (2008) then emphasized the possibility that the visibility of the translator in case of AVT seems irrational since the translator is not the only person in charge of dubbing an AV product (mostly the distributors in Italy decide on whether to translate any part of the film or not), and more importantly, the more visible the translator in an AV product, the less fluent the translated text will

¹ The phrase ‘entirely objective’ is intentionally avoided since, in Translation Studies, such a claim might seem to be a very far-fetched objective.

be. In conclusion, the lack of agency on the part of AV translator can ensure two claims about the adoption of certain translation strategies: these strategies were chosen based on the economic situation defined by the distributors, and partial or full translation of film musicals played a significant role in changing the Italian audience's reception of this genre.

A year later, Cintrão (2009) emphasized the limitations of song translation imposed by both melodic and poetic elements to prepare the grounds for justifying that in translating songs, only “creative transposition” is possible (Cintrão 2009: 238). Having this concept in mind, he introduced the translations of song lyrics by Gilberto Gil and his adaptation of the song “I just called to say I love you” by Stevie Wonder into Portuguese. By comparing the original lyrics with the culturally adapted version, he came to conclusions that Gil was more of a co-author than a translator due to his own way of reading the original (identifying what was necessary or unnecessary to include in his version of the lyrics), but his version seems to be close to the original's structure, cohesion and coherence, content message, and image. Gil's decisions, seemed to be originated from the original lyrics, but had a tendency towards the target culture and target norms.

Åkerström (2010) asserted that translating song lyrics should be called ‘text arrangement’ or ‘interpretation,’ not translation. With the aim of understanding the translation process and strategies, she studied three musicals, *Chess*, *Mamma Mia!* from English into Swedish and *Kristina från Duvemåla* from Swedish into English to investigate 10 translation features occurrences in 12 songs. The features are as follows:

- Additions of words
- Use of rhymes
- Word count
- Omission of words
- Syllables vs. words
- Use of paraphrases
- Use of metaphors
- Use of English words in the translations
- Word-for-word translation
- Reorganization of words and lines of text

The results of Åkerström's (2010) study on song lyrics translation showed that English original songs had fewer words than the translated Swedish versions, while the opposite was true for the Swedish original songs. One reason for this could be the fact that in English, the article *the* stands separately

from noun phrases, while in Swedish, it becomes a part of the word. Besides, the number of syllables in the source text exactly matched the number of syllables in the translated text. Also, the use of word-for-word translation, additions, omissions, and the use of English words in translated versions were rare and in some cases none. Furthermore, she compared ST and TT metaphors and concluded that the difference was insignificant. The number of rhymes varied in each musical due to the particular meter or rhyme patterns that each song holds. She also figured out that the most frequent translation strategy used in translating songs was the use of paraphrases. A worthwhile issue about the research corpus is that two musicals were selected from English into Swedish, but the researcher did not mention why she included a Swedish musical in the corpus as well, while choosing another English musical, if possible, could make the corpus more focused and homogeneous, as she pointed out in conclusion section: “whether or not English words are actually avoided in Swedish song translations, is impossible to say based on the small scope of this study” (Åkerström 2010: 28). Thus, the researcher herself mentions the need for a more precise and exhaustive corpus. Notwithstanding, some discrepancies in the results such as the word count and reorganization are due to this fact.

Three years later, Pedram (2013), in her M.A. thesis, studied the process of translating and dubbing animation songs in Iran from English into Persian. The data was analyzed at both macro and micro levels, by employing Low’s (2003) and Schjoldager’s (2008) models, for each phase, respectively. The results of the study demonstrated that translators did not manage to consider ‘sense,’ ‘naturalness,’ and ‘rhythm’ at macro level of analysis and, at the micro level, they employed ‘paraphrase’ strategy the most of all. This led to the conclusion that the translations of songs were mostly target text-oriented.

2.1. Low’s pentathlon principle

Low’s (2003) ‘pentathlon principle’ defines singability, sense, naturalness, rhythm, and rhyme as essential components to create singable translations of songs.

2.1.1. Singability

Singability in Low’s words is a pragmatic criterion that “must receive top priority in [song] translation. This is a logical result of thinking in terms of the target text’s specific purpose, its skopos” (Low 2003: 93). Singability is closely related to the effectiveness of a performable text. This effectiveness may be endangered by several possibilities; for instance, performing consonant clusters, singing short-

sounded words on long notes, and mismatching emphasized words to unstressed musical notes (Low 2008).

2.1.2. Sense

In Low's pentathlon principle, the issue of semantic meaning is also highlighted, but he asserts that in case of a constraint such as singability, some slight changes in the sense is required. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that these changes or manipulations must remain as little as possible because "the transfer of the meaning remains an important criterion" (Low 2008: 94). These manipulations can include replacing the original word with a near-synonym, a narrow term by a superordinate term, or substituting a particular metaphor by another one which functions in a similar way in the context.

2.1.3. Naturalness

To assess the naturalness of a text, elements like register and word order must be taken into account (Low 2008). A singable translation of a poem should be able to communicate efficiently and excellently with the audience right at the moments when it is being performed. An unnatural translation demands much more cognitive efforts on the part of the audience. Yet, Low does not declare that naturalness should be preserved at any cost. For this reason, it is to be noted that some minor changes in word order is anticipated in Persian translations of lyrics, such as substituting noun and adjective with one another (in Persian, adjectives come after the noun), therefore *گل زیبای دیدم* /goli zibā didam/ "I saw a beautiful flower" might change into *دیدم زیبا گلی* /zibā goli didam/ in a poem. However, what is considered as unnatural in the current study, are cases such as *فردا رو می آغازیم* /farad-ro miāqāzim/ (back translation for this line from "Where You Are" is "we will begin tomorrow or future"). The Persian word *آغاز* /āqāz/ "start" is a noun that received inflectional affixes that are merely specific to verbs.

2.1.4. Rhyme

In some cases, such as subtitling, it is possible to skip the rhyme in translating a song. Nevertheless, in other types of translation, the retention of the rhyming pattern is required. Sometimes song translators succeed in preserving the number of rhymes and even their exact location; however, this normally happens when other important elements of song have been sacrificed. For this reason, Low (2008) asserts that flexibility and compromise are the key solution to a good singable translation.

2.1.5. Rhythm

Rhythm is closely related to syllable counts. In the pentathlon principle, rendering the exact number of syllables is desirable. However, in many cases this cannot happen. For instance, English poetry would not usually favor long lines of eight syllables. Consequently, the translator omits a syllable or two on a repeated note. If it is required to add a syllable, they would compromise by adding it on a melisma.² This is a change in verbal rhythm, but sometimes the music is manipulated as well. For example, sometimes an upbeat has to be broken down into two small notes in order to be adjusted for the verbal rhythm.

2.2. Franzon's Model of Singability

Franzon (2008) devised his model of singability based on the European melopoetic norm that consists of three layers: prosodic, poetic, and semantic-reflexive layers. For a translated song to be singable, it should match these layers. Each one of these layers can be achieved by observing the music's melody, structure, and expression that are manifested in the text by different elements.

A singable lyric achieves	by observing the music's	which may appear in the text as
1. a prosodic match	<i>melody</i> : music as notated, producing lyrics that are comprehensible and sound natural when sung	syllable count; rhythm; intonation, stress; sounds for easy singing
2. a poetic match	<i>structure</i> : music as performed, producing lyrics that attract the audience's attention and achieve poetic effect	rhyme; segmentation of phrases/lines/stanzas; parallelism and contrast; location of key words
3. a semantic-reflexive match	<i>expression</i> : music perceived as meaningful, producing lyrics that reflect or explain what the music 'says'	the story told, mood conveyed, character(s) expressed; description (word-painting); metaphor

Table 1. Functional consequences of match between lyrics and music (adopted from Franzon 2008: 390)

² A group of notes that are sung on one syllable.

3. Proposed Model of Singability

In the current study, the singability of Persian translations of dubbed songs were analyzed through a merged model. This model is a combination of Low's and Franzon's models and an added element of 'lip-synchronization' in order to make a more precise conclusion about those songs that are performed in close-up shots; therefore, this element would be considered only when necessary. As Franzon (2008) stated, items presented in his model should be considered as layers with descending levels of importance. As "the semantic-reflexive match seems to presuppose [prosodic match and poetic match] presence" (Franzon 2008, 391). Therefore, in the current research, elements presented at prosodic and poetic levels are of paramount importance, and their scoring system will be elaborated below. In figure 1, the direction of significance is top down, thus semantic-reflexive match is of the least importance.

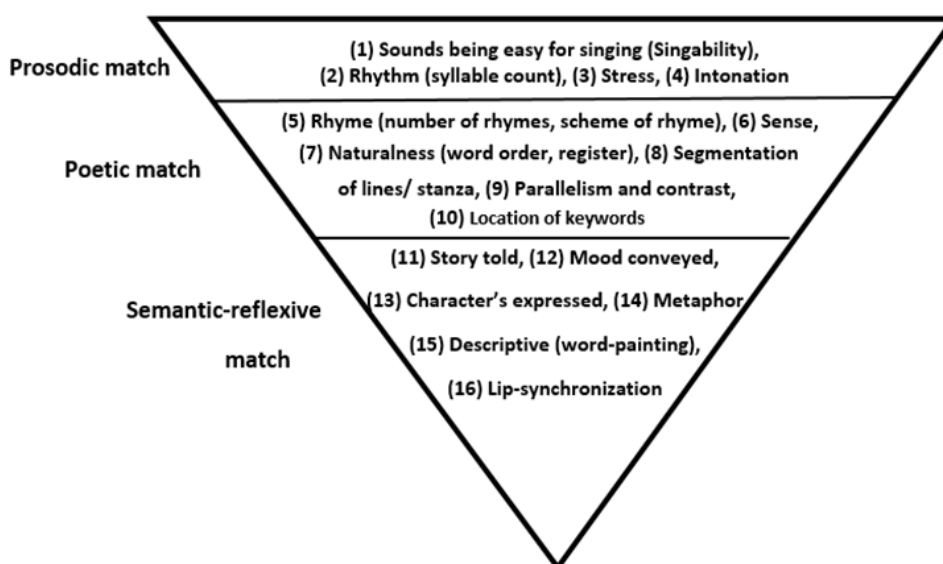


Figure 1. Singability Analysis Model

Further explanations seem necessary for some of the items presented such as Word-painting. Some songs enjoy a melody that is composed to match the literal lyrics. In this note sheet taken from the song "I Am Moana", the words 'falling and rising' are sung on falling and rising notes (see Figure 2). Word-painting is difficult to maintain and is highly dependent on the sense of the translation.



Figure 2. Word-painting example on an excerpt of “I am Moana” note sheet

There are eight types of mood defined by Thayer as shown in figure 3 below (Bhat, Amith, Prasad and Mohan 2014). For example, the mood of the song “It’s a Sunshine Day” from *Trolls*, is energetic because it has the high tempo of 130 beats per minute (bpm), while a normal tempo has 120 bpm.

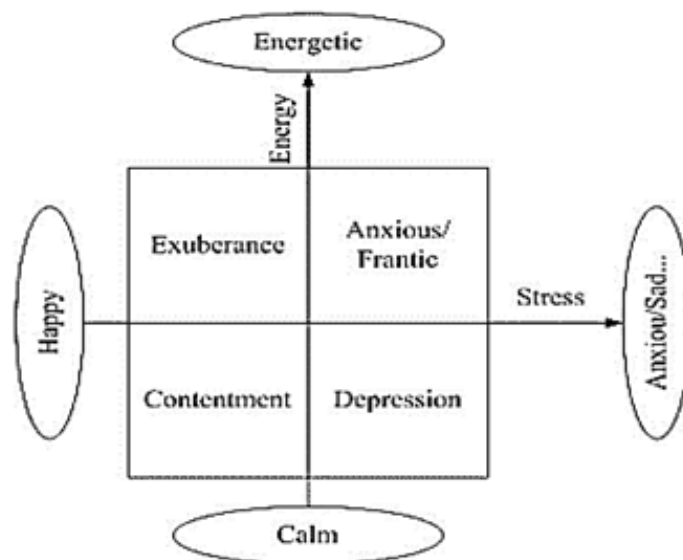


Figure 3. Thayer’s Mood Model (adopted from Bhat et al. 2014: 359)

In assessing rhyming words two features should be taken into consideration; frequency and quality (Low 2008). Depending on the rhyming pattern of each stanza, the frequency of the rhyme is different; sometimes a verse has rhyming words in every two lines, or even two or more rhyming words in each line (Low 2008). The significance of each rhyme needs to be prioritized by assessing the rhyme’s audible effect (Low 2008). In any musical measure, there are two types of beats: downbeat and upbeat. Most of the time more than one note is played on each beat and each note carries one syllable of the lyrics. The beat is best realized by clapping hands along with the music. The time when the hands meet is downbeat and upbeat is the timing between each two downbeats; that is, the time hands get away from each other. The rhyming words are often located on downbeats which is more stressed and louder and therefore, makes the rhyming syllable more audible. To get a clear image of this technique, notice the

notes sheet of an excerpt selected from the song “Get Back Up Again” from *Trolls* (Figure 3). Note how the music lengthens the rhyming syllables ‘sky’ and ‘fly’ in the word *butterfly*.

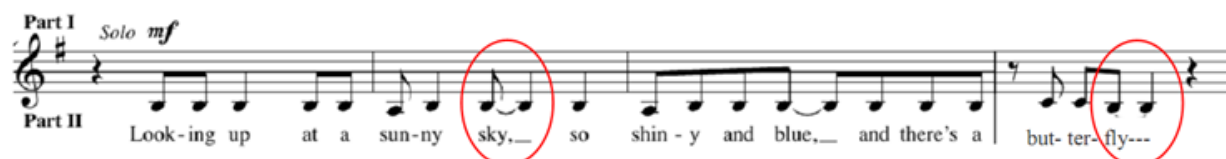


Figure 4. Rhymes on downbeats

1. Looking up at a sunny sky,

آسمون آفتابی /āsemun-e āftabi/

So shiny and blue

به پروانه‌ی /ye parvāneye/

And there's a butterfly

خوشگل و آبی /koškel-o ābi/

(back translation: “Sunny day, a butterfly, pretty and blue”)

This type of rhyme is normally called ‘clinging rhyme’ and it “closes the pattern in a satisfying way at the very point where a sentence ends” (Low 2008: 7), and usually comes before the singer takes a deep and long breath. Transferring these rhymes and specially those at the end of a refrain, is much more important than translating the passing rhymes or intermediate rhymes because the latter are less audible. Also, there is no need to translate every single rhyming word in a piece of song; what matters more is not to create a weak clinging rhyme (Low 2008). In example 1, the rhyming original words are replaced by a pair of perfect rhymes ‘آفتابی’ /āftābi/ (meaning sunny) and ‘آبی’ /ābi/ (meaning blue) that both end in the same syllable (/bi/) strengthening the clinging rhyme satisfactorily.

Singability as an item refers to sounds in a translated song to be easy for singing; Franzon (2008) stated this as ‘phonetic suitability’ of words and the way the consonants and vowels are arranged. In other words, there should be a harmony between singing lyrics and playing musical notes. For instance, an open rhyming syllable cannot end in short vowels if its relate note is long. Also, the consonant clusters in two adjacent words can make it difficult to articulate. Therefore, it is required to avoid beginning a word with the same consonant that the preceding words ends in.

2. And there's a cold lonely light that shines from you

دلتنها و تاریک و نگرone /delet tanhā-o negarune/

(back translation: “Your heart is lonely, dark and worried”)

In example 2, the second word in Persian translation begins with /t/ sound that ended the preceding word (/delet tanhā/) which makes the ideal singability hard to achieve. In example 3 below, chosen from “Moment of Truth,” the translation of the line does not include sounds that would be easy for singing, especially in a song with such a fast tempo (130 bpm) and short lines, where the exact same consonant and vowel (/je/) follows in the adjacent word; /vāse-je je taqjir/.

3. But if it's ever gonna change

ولی واسه‌ی به تغییر /vali vāse-je je taqjir/

(back translation: “But for a change...”)

Low (2008) also mentioned the inevitable essence of flexibility in rendering the sense of the source text, and the undoubtedly needed tools and compensations in transferring meaning in case of song translation. Nonetheless, the liberties the song translator takes must have limits, because in the context of songs, ‘semantic details’ are as important as phonetic features. In example 4, Moana gains back self-confidence after being so discouraged and, disappointed in herself. It is important to convey the semantic details of this line for the general message that the song carries; that is, to believe in herself. However, we see that the first line’s translation has the opposite meaning.

4. I've delivered us to where we are, I have journeyed farther

اونامو اینجا رسوندن، درس خودشونو دادن /unā manu ingā resundan, dars-e kodešuno dādan/

(back translation: “They’ve delivered me to where I am, they taught me their lesson”)

All these items will be analyzed based on Low’s (2008) scoring scale of singability from null to ten. He devised a scale sheet for both Rhyme and Rhythm that are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Possible Options	For Closed Syllables	Point(s)	For Open Syllables	Point(s)
Consonant and the vowels on both sides	Love/glove	10	Belie/rely	10
Good rhyme	Love/ shove	8	Lie/fly	9
Consonant close but not identical	Love/rough	6	Lie/rye	7
Consonant different	Love/lug	2	Lie/die	5
Vowel close but not identical	Love/move	4	Lie/lay	3
Vowel different	Love/have	1	Lie/lee	1

Table 2. Rhyme scoring scales

In this study, scoring system for other elements, except Rhyme, in prosodic match and poetic match levels, would be the same as Rhythm assessment, that is, through subtracting one point whenever a problematic defect is detected.

Rhythmic variants already present in song	loses zero point
Small alteration to rhythm	loses one point
Small alteration to melody	loses three points

Table 3. Rhythm scoring scales

For transferring other items of semantic reflexive match, extra points will be allocated to the translations as bonus (6 points for a fair rendition, 8 points for a good one and 10 points for a very good transfer). The total score should not fall under 80 points in order to be considered as singable; since Low believes that earning 8 points on each factor would be considered as a ‘real success’ (Low 2008: 18).

5. Results and Discussion

The proposed singability model was authenticated by analyzing twenty-five songs from five animated movies (the data is presented in Table 4). All songs were translated and dubbed by Soren Studio, a private Persian dubbing studio in Iran. Table 5 is an example of a non-singable translation provided for “It’s a Sunshine Day” from *Trolls*, scoring 72.33 points.

Movie Title	Songs
<i>Trolls</i> (2016)	“Move Your Feet” “Get Back Up Again” “The Sound of Silence” “Clint Eastwood” “It's A Sunshine Day”
<i>Sing</i> (2016)	“I’m Still Standing”
<i>Moana</i> (2016)	“Where You Are” “How Far I’ll Go” “We Know the Way” “How Far I’ll Go (reprise)” “You’re Welcome” “Shiny” “I Am Moana” “Know Who You Are” “We Know the Way (reprise)” 9.
<i>Coco</i> (2017)	“Everyone Knows Juanita” “Un Poco Loco” “Proud Corzon” “Remember Me”
<i>Smallfoot</i> (2018)	“Perfection” “Wonderful Life” “Percy’s Pressure” “Wonderful Questions” “Let It Lie” “Moment of Truth”

Table 4. The Research Data

Singability Item	Points	Explanations
Rhyme	8	Forty points were achieved on the rhyming words; hence the average would be 8 points.
Rhythm	5	There are 5 lines that have different syllable counts with the deviations more than 2 syllables.
Naturalness	3	—
Singability	10	No acoustically problematic word or phrase was found.
Sense	4	There were 3 cases of parallelism in this song. Therefore, all 10 points should be distributed among these three cases and only one of them was transferred in the Persian translation.
Parallelism	3.33	—
Location of Keyword(s)	None	The two words of Sunshine Day are the key phrase in the song which were replaced by ‘oh, oh, oh’ (having the same number of syllables) in the dubbed version.
Segmentation of Lines/Stanzas	10	No modifications were detected in the dubbed version of the song.
Intonation	10	—
Stress	9	’ as a preposition ٤ In the translation, the stress is on the word ‘ while the original’s stress was placed on ‘everybody’ that caused a deduction in points since the stress has fell on the wrong word and caused some sort of unnatural emphasis.
Bonus	10	10 points are added for a very good rendition of mood.
Total Score	72.33	—

Table 5. “It’s A Sunshine Day” singability analysis

Translations of songs were divided into several stanzas and then scrutinized (to see an example of the analysis process, refer to Appendix). The results of the examinations were illustrated in form of tables, such as table 6. This table is an instance of a singable translation of “How Far I’ll Go” from *Moana* with 90.95 points. The rest of the songs received the same analysis procedure.

Singability Item	Points	Explanations
Rhyme	8.45	This is the average of 93 points as a total number for 11 cases.
Rhythm	5	—
Naturalness	6	—
Singability	10	—
Sense	10	—
Parallelism	7.5	Three cases out of four were actually transferred.
Location of Keyword(s)	10	' تا كجاها، می شه پیدا ' The key words are 'how far I'll go' translated as /tā kodjāhā miše pejdā/ (back translation: "To where, it would be apparent").
Segmentation of Lines/Stanzas	9	—
Intonation	None	There were three cases of high pitched voice, all of which were sung in a rather constant voice.
Stress	9	—
Bonus	16	8 points are added for the good lip synchronization. And another 8 points are considered for the story of the song being told well (showing the inner conflict of the character between what her father and people want her to be, and what she wants to be herself).
Total Score	90.95	—

Table 6. "How Far I'll Go" singability analysis

The results of data analysis showed numerous trends. The whole corpus gained the average of 83.48 points on singability analysis.

The singable songs obtained 91.32 points as the average score with the most frequent item being Singability by 11% (figure 4). But since Singability is the highest occurred item for non-singable songs (15%) as well (figure 5), Singability does not seem to be what distinguishes singable translations from non-singable ones. This pattern is also true in case of Segmentation of lines which is one of the highest occurred items for both groups of singable translations (11%) and non-singable translations (12%).

A significance difference between singable translations of songs and non-singable ones is enlightened in the Location of keywords. For singable translations, this item's average score is 7.81 points while for non-singable translations, this value is absolute zero. This great deviation leads to the

conclusion that the Location of keywords is one of the most prominent factors that make the translation of a song singable. Not to mention that the correct rendition of the keywords is as much important as the location of them in the lyrics. The semantic meaning of the keyword is in line with the analysis of Sense. The results demonstrated that Sense value is considerably different between the two groups of translated songs (singable and non-singable); while the average for Sense in singable translations is 7.31 points, it is only 4.60 points for non-singable translations. It is essential to take into account that, in addition to technical constraints (such as lip-synchronization), cultural and ideological issues can also influence the loss of Sense in translating songs into Persian. In coping with culture-specific units in songs, two schemes were operated: omission and cultural adaptation. In the third stanza of “Where You Are”, there is a reference to taro plant which is common in Africa and Oceania, but not in Western Asia where Iran is. For this reason, the translator chose to omit the reference all together (example 5).

5. Don't trip on the taro root, that's all you need

آروم، آروم حرکت کن، یا ندو / ārum ārum harkat kon ya nado/

(back translation: “Slowly, move slowly,” or “don't run”)

In some other cases, the cultural related item in the original is replaced with an Iranian culture-specific unit in translation. For instance, in “You're Welcome” (example 6), the character Maui is referring to his little tattoo of himself (that he calls mini-Maui) performing a tap dance. While Western societies are familiar with tap dancing, Iranians in general are not. Consequently, the translator adapts this line to an Iranian-specific kind of music called شیش و هشت (/šiš-o hašt/). This type of music has a rhythm of six eighths quaver notes. Its specific feature is an energetic and exuberant mood.

6. Look at that mini-Maui just tippity-tappin'

اینجا وقتی شیش و هشتی می شه فازم / inā vaqti šiš-o hašti miše fāzam/

(back translation: “This [is] when my musical mood becomes sweet”)

A similar example of this strategy was observed in “I Am Moana” that expresses the journey of life and its difficulties, and later on in the song, how one should overcome them and move on. In Persian translation, this notion is compared to the darkness and obscurity of night, moreover, taking this comparison a step further to Yalda Night, an Iranian festival at the end of autumn that is known to be the longest and darkest night of the year. Although the translator here (example 7) associated absolute

darkness and despair to Yalda Night, for Iranians, this night does not convey hopelessness, but happiness. On Yalda Night, Iranians gather together with family and friends, celebrating, eating, drinking, and read poems by Hafez or other ancient Iranian poets.

7. Sometimes the world seems against you

بعضی وقتا سخت می‌شه دنیا /bazi vaqta saḡt miše donyā /

The journey may leave a scar

سفر می‌ذاره زخم بجا /safar mizāre zaḡm be jā/

But scars can heal and reveal just, where you are

شب‌هات بلند مثل شب یلدا، در هر جا /šabhāt boland mesle šabe yaldā dar har jā /

(back translation: “Sometimes life is hard, journey leaves scars, your nights are long like Yalda Night, in everywhere”)

The other factor that endangers Sense in Persian translations of the songs, is the ideological considerations. Perhaps illustration of some examples from the corpus would serve better. In two different songs in *Moana*, “Where You Are” and “How Far I’ll Go”, Moana’s father, who leads a Polynesian village called Motunui, tries to prepare Moana for her leadership after he is gone (example 8); and Moana herself refers to it in the song she sings afterwards (example 9). Her future leadership seems to me missed in both stanzas.

8. Moana, stay on the ground now

بشین و خوب تماشا کن /bešin-o ḡub tamašā kon/

Our people will need a chief

به مردممون نگاه کن /be mardomemun negā kon/

And there you are

به مردممون نگاه کن /be mardomemun negā kon/

موانا /muānā/

(back translation: “Sit down and watch closely, look at our people, Moana”)

9. I can lead with pride, I can make us strong

پس منم ترانه‌ی راه خودمو می‌سرایم /pas manam tarāneye rahe ḡudamo misorāyam/

(back translation: “So I sing my own song”)

In two other two songs, “You’re Welcome” (example 10) and “Shiny” (example 11) from *Moana*, Maui is associated in lyrics with a *demi-god*. Since the common belief in Iran is monotheism, demi-god is substituted with other options.

10. I know it's a lot: the hair, the bod!
When you're staring at a demi-god

موهام افشون خودم بی باک / muhām afšun kudam bibāk/
قدرتم بیشتر از آب و باد / qodratam bištar-az āb-o bād/

(back translation: “My hair is cool and I’m fearless, my power is more than water and wind”).

11. Little Maui’s having trouble with his look
You little semi-demi-mini-god

مانویی دیگه قدرت قبلو نداره / māoi dige qodrate qabl-o nadāre/
قهرمان کوچولوی بیچاره / qahramāne kučuluye bičāre/

(back translation: “Maui doesn’t have power as he used to, you little poor hero”)

The last example concerning ideology-driven Persian translation is extracted from two stanzas in the song “How Far I’ll Go (reprise).” In these segments, Moana is expressing herself about leaving her family behind, and embarks on an adventure on her own, away from everyone and everything she knows. However, in the translation of example 12, it is implied that it is not acceptable for a teenage girl to start a trip on her own, as shown in example 13 as well, that ‘she won’t be alone’.

12. All the time wondering where I want to be, is behind me

وقتی با خانواده ام هستم ناهمسو / vaqti bā kānevadam hastam nāhamsu/

I’m in my own, to worlds unknown

آیندم نیست، جز یک سو سو / āyandam nist joz yek susu/

(back translation: “As long as I do not agree with my parents, my future is nothing but a glimmer of light”)

13. Yes, I know

آره می‌دونم / āre midunam/

That I can go

تنها نمی‌مونم / tanhā nemimunam/

(back translation: “Yes, I know, I won’t be alone”)

There are plenty similar cases in the corpus. Such rather drastic changes in the meaning of lyrics are not unforeseen, as Marc (2015: 5) maintains, “what music means is determined by its cultures of production, distribution and reception”, hence in reproduction of music, meaning is again culturally determined. As she affirms this proposition that music “changes, often dramatically, when transferred from one culture to another, generating specific soundscapes in each culture” (Marc 2015: 15).

The other factor that differentiates between the singable translations and non-singable ones is Stress. After Singability and Segmentation of lines, Stress is the highest item by the average score of 9.56 (10%) among singable translations; whereas for non-singable translations, this value is lessened to 4.20 (6%).

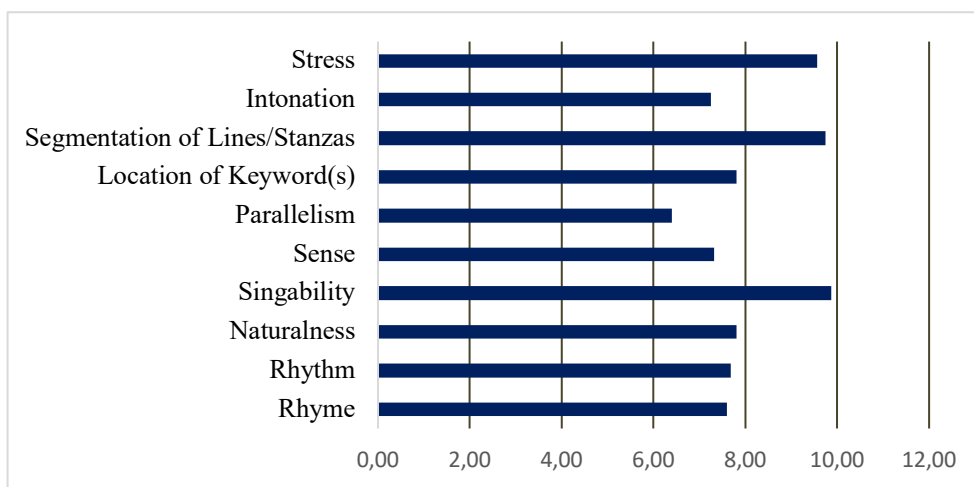


Figure 5. Average of Total Singability Items Value in Singable Translations

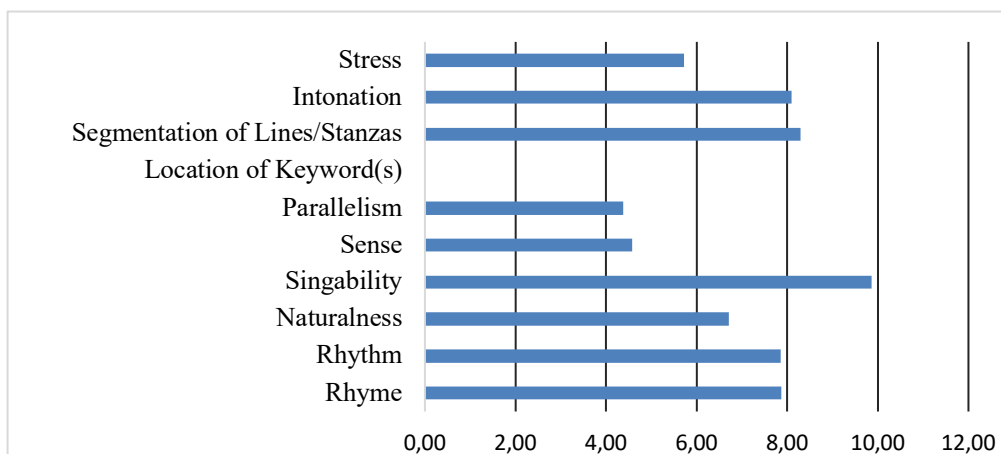


Figure 6. Average of Total Singability Items Value in Non-singable Translations

Another fairly significant distinction between these two groups of data is the value of Intonation. The average score for Intonation of singable songs is 7.25 points which makes it the second lowest item value for this group (by 8%); on the contrary, Intonation of non-singable translations is the second highest score with 9.33 points (14% of the total score). The most probable reason is the fact that interrogatives are turned into declaratives in Persian translations in 80% of intonation cases. The shift from interactive sentences to declarative ones, changes the high-pitched sounds into rather flat sounds, hence alters Intonation. A potential explanation for this contradiction in results, is that sacrificing Intonation could help preserving Sense—as mentioned before, Sense scored higher in singable translations than in non-singable ones.

7. Conclusions

The aim of this study was to attest the applicability of the proposed singability model to the translated songs from English into Persian to arrive at a less subjective way to analyze translated and dubbed songs. Twenty-six translated songs were selected and analyzed against the merged model. Translations of songs had been marked based on Low's (2008) scoring scale. They had been scored from null to ten. The ideal value was eight points for each item, thus eighty points overall. Sixteen songs scored eighty and more, hence decided as singable translations.

Findings of the singability analysis showed that although Singability and Segmentation of lines scored the highest (9.88 and 9.33 points, respectively), they are not the proper criteria for separating singable translations from non-singable ones, since these two items also gained the highest scores in non-singable group of data (Singability scored 9.86 and Segmentation marked 8.29 points). Two determinative factors of singability analysis that can differentiate between singable translated songs and non-singable ones, are Location of keywords and Sense. While Location of the keywords obtained 7.81 points in singable translation group, this number is zero for the non-singable group, meaning that, not even one song in the non-singable translations group could maintain the location of keywords. In terms of Sense, singable translations scored 7.31 points, whereas this item value for non-singable translations was considerably lower (4.60 points). Sense can be easily manipulated because its transfer is conditioned by different facets including melodic features maintenance (such as rhythm and intonation), technical aspects (image-sound coherence), and universal and cultural references (Gato 2013). In the current corpus, in addition to cultural references, ideology influenced Sense as well which led to some changes in semantic details. Translators adopted two major strategies to deal with cultural references in lyrics. They either deleted the cultural-specific units, or replaced it with a Persian cultural reference (as in example 6, a type of dance was adapted to a kind of Persian music). In this respect,

cultural element is associated with a translational aid rather than a limitation. Therefore, it is vital to anticipate such semantic changes in translated songs, “because the heteroglot social, historical and aesthetic conditions to which it was originally linked would have changed too” (Marc 2015: 15).

In addition to Location of keywords and Sense, Stress and Intonation distinguished between singable and non-singable translations as well. Stress was the third highest item value by the average score of 9.56 in singable translations; however, the value of this item for non-singable translations extensively dropped to 4.20. Intonation was the second lowest item in singable translations, while it is represented as the second highest component among non-singable translations. The reason for this is the shift from interrogatives in original songs into declaratives in Persian translations. Therefore, Intonation is sacrificed in singable translations in order to maintain the Sense.

In order to assess the singability of translated songs of animations into Persian, we devised a model that takes into consideration the technical, musical, suprasegmental, semantic, and expressive features. In fact, singability analysis does not have to be merely restricted to these elements. Reception studies can assist in this respect as well. Reception studies for dubbed audiovisual products proved beneficial in establishing dubbing quality standards. These standards are potentially the ultimate objective of translators, dubbing directors, and voice actors (Chaume 2007).

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Appendix:

Song Translation's Analysis

In this section, the original song lyrics and its transcribed Persian dubbed version are separated into a number of stanzas. Subsequently, the translated lines are analyzed in terms of the singability model's components. The song "How Far I'll Go" is proposed here as an example; all the other songs went through the same analysis process.

Parallelism is specified by underlines and the number of syllables for each line is written in parentheses in front of them. Also, whenever a stress of a word is important to mention, it will be shown by "´" on that word or syllable. Besides, the ascending arrow shows a high pitched intonation and the descending one shows a low pitched intonation.

How Far I'll Go

Songwriters: Lin-Manuel Miranda

How Far I'll Go lyrics © Walt Disney Music Company, Universal Music Publishing Group

Stanza 1

1. I've been 'staring at the edge of the water (11)
2. 'Long as I can remember, never really knowing why (14)
3. I wish I could be the perfect daughter (10)
4. But I come back to the 'water, no matter how hard I try (15)

چشم 'دوختم به کنارهی آب (9)
از وقتی خودمو شناختم، چرا مونده همیشه به یادم (19)
ای کاش بودم یه دختر پرتلاش (11)
ولی هر لحظه 'هر دم، ساحل بود همدم (12)

Note 1: Stress on the word 'water' in the last line has been placed on 'هر' (meaning 'every') in the dubbed version and it seems somehow strange to emphasize on such a word. Besides, the translation has 3 syllables less than the original; therefore, the voice actress has to sing the short vowel /æ/ (in /hær/) on three long notes. This fact makes the stress located on the word 'هر' unusual.

Note 2: 2 points are reduced in rhythm because of the rather great deviation between syllable counts in lines 2 and 4 with their translations.

Note 3: One point is reduced in naturalness because of the unnatural word orders in lines 1, 3, and 4 (verbs have come before the adjective or object).

Note 4: Based on rhyme scales demonstrated in table 2, 10 points are considered for the rich rhyming words 'یادم' and 'همدم'.

Stanza 2

1. Every 'turn I take, every 'trail I track (10)
2. Every 'path I make, every 'road leads back (10)
3. To the place I know, where I cannot go, where I long to be (15)

سر 'هر پیچ و خم 'هر مسیر (9)
توی 'هر جاده که شدم درگیر (11)
ساختن قدم بعدی، هدفم بود بعید (13)

Note: 8 points are allocated to the good rhymes 'مسیر' and 'درگیر'.

Stanza 3

1. See the line where the sky meets the sea? It 'calls me (12)
2. And no one 'knows, how far it 'goes (8)
3. If the wind in my sail on the sea stays behind me (13)
4. One day I'll know, if I go there's just no telling how far I'll go (16)

آسمون و دریا همنشین، تو 'ببین (12)
 تا کجا'ها، می‌شه 'پیدا (8)
 آگه بوزه نسیمی به بادبان قایقم (15)
 از غما فارغم، به راه دور دریاها راغیم (16)

Note 1: One point is reduced in terms of naturalness for the location of the verb 'بوزه' at the beginning of the conditional sentence in line 3.

Note 2: 5 points are considered for the internal rhyming words in line 2 ('پیدا' and 'کجاها'). Also, 8 points are given to the good rhymes of lines 3 and 4 ('قایقم' and 'راغیم').

Stanza 4

1. I know everybody on this island, seems so happy on this island (18)
2. Everything is by design (7)
3. I know everybody on this island has a role on this island (17)
4. So maybe I can roll with mine (8)

مردم این جزیره، شادن خوشی نمی‌میره (15)
 کارا خوب پیش می‌ره (5)
 مردم این جزیره راهشون بلدن (14)
 ترانشونو سرودن (8)

Note 1: 10 points are allocated to each rhyming pairs 'نمی‌میره', 'می‌ره' and 'بلدن', 'سرودن'.

Note 2: 2 points are reduced in rhythm because of the contradiction of syllable numbers in line 1 and line 3.

Stanza 5

1. I can lead with pride, I can make us strong (10)
2. I'll be satisfied if I play along (10)
3. But the voice inside sings a different song (11)
4. What is wrong with me? (5)

پس منم ترانه‌ی (7)
 راه خودمو می‌سرایم (9)
 نیست هدف اینجا موندنم (8)
 چم شده من؟ (4)

Note 1: Another 2 points are reduced because of disarranged rhythm caused by difference in syllable counts of lines 1 and 3.

Note 2: Another point is lessened in naturalness because of disarranged word order in line 3.

Note 3: 8 points are given to rhyming words 'می‌سرایم' and 'موندنم'.

Note 4: One point is reduced in terms of line segmentation. Line 2 in translation is supposed to complete line 1; whereas in the original text, these two lines are not dependent on each other. Also, the singer has to lengthen the short vowel /e/ at the end of the first line, to semantically connect it to the next line which aesthetically, does not sound good, especially that this vowel in Persian syntax only connects nouns in a noun phrase and has no semantic meaning whatsoever.

Stanza 6

1. See the light as it shines on the sea? It's blinding (12)
2. But no one knows, how deep it goes (8)
3. And it seems like it's calling out to me, so come find me (14)
4. And let me know, what's beyond that line, will I cross that line? (14)

می‌درخشه آفتاب روی آب، دلم بی‌تاب (13)
 نداره حساب، عمق این آب (9)
 توی گوشم می‌خونه صدایی رو آب (12)
 بشم سوار، اون ور صخره، نگو که سخته (14)

Note 1: The following scores are allocated to the rhyming words in this stanza: 10 points to the internal rhyming words in line 1 'آفتاب' and 'بی‌تاب', 8 points to another internal rhyming pair in line 2 ('حساب' and 'آب'), and 8 more points to words 'بی‌تاب' and 'آب'.

Note 2: One point is reduced in naturalness because of the unusual sentence in last two lines 'رو آب بشم سوار' (kind of meaning 'I get on water'). This sentence contradicts with the common sense. There may be some other options that could still make sense, convey the same whole meaning and more importantly, would not seem unnatural. One option could be as follows:

می‌درخشه آفتاب روی آب، دلم بی‌تاب
 نداره حساب، عمق این آب

و انگار منو صدا می‌زنه قایقم (13)

برم باهانش، تا اون ور صخره، نگو که سخته (15)

The original two last lines together, have 28 syllables, so do the options we offered here. Therefore, rhythm will not be endangered. Supposedly, there will be other options available that would avoid unnatural structures and semantic content.

Note 3: Furthermore, there are two cases of high pitched intonation in lines 1 and 4 that are not observed in the dubbed version.

Stanza 7



1. The line where the sky meets the sea? It calls me (11)
2. And no one knows, how far it goes (8)
3. If the wind in my sail on the sea stays behind me (13)
4. One day I'll know, how far I'll go (8)

آسمون و دریا همنشین، تو ببین (11)

تا کجاها، می‌شه پیدا (8)

اگه بوزه نسیمی به بادبان قایقم (15)

به دور دست‌ها، رهسپارم (8)

Note: Two rhyming words at the very end of lines 3 and 4 earn 8 points.

Note 2: The first three lines are parallel to the third stanza of the song and this parallelism is transferred by repeating the same lines in the target version.

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Kabir and the Avatars

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The Indian religious poet Kabir (d. ca. 1518) often referred to his God using Vaishnava names, names that refer to the Hindu god Vishnu. Kabir also uses names for God that are not specific to Vishnu and even uses Muslim names. Vishnu is said to have been incarnated in several earthly avatars. The most important are Krishna and king Ramachandra. A traditional list names ten avatars. Kabir often refers to these earthly avatars, but he minimizes their importance in various ways such as emphasizing the fact that they all died. Most modern scholars have taken Kabir's use of Vaishnava vocabulary to identify him as a Vaishnava, albeit an unorthodox one. Kabir's rejection of the avatars and his focus on a supreme God without form or personality tends to put this identification in doubt.

Keywords: Kabir; avatar; Vishnu; Ismaili; bhakti; viraha.

1. Kabir's God

Discussions about the religious ideas of the North Indian religious poet Kabir (ca. 1440-1518) often focus on how his bhakti, his devotion to God, compares to that of other religious figures of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹ How should we describe the relation between the *nirgun* bhakti of Kabir and the *sagun* bhakti of Surdas, Tulsidas, and Mirabai? Related questions concern the influence of Islam and

¹ During the preparation of this essay, parts of it were discussed with Purushottam Agrawal, Linda Hess, and Pinuccia Caracchi, Patton Burchett, and John S. Hawley. Their comments clarified many points, even when we ended up agreeing to disagree. The *Kervan* readers also made useful suggestions. In the essay, the identifying song (*ramaini*, *pad* or *shabda*) numbers are taken from Vichardas Shastri's 1965 edition of the *Kabir bijak* and from Shyamsundar Das's 1968 edition of the *Kabir granthavali*. The *Adi granth* compositions are identified according to the page and song numbers of the official Sikh edition of the text. For the *Adi granth* songs of Kabir, I used the texts in Winand Callewaert's *The Millennium Kabir Vani* (Kabir 2000). All the translations in the present essay are my own. Full translations into English of the *Kabir bijak* by Ahmad Shah (Kabir 1977) and of the Kabir compositions in the *Adi granth* by Nirmal Dass (Kabir 1991) have been published, but not of those in the *Kabir granthavali*. The *Bijak* translation by Hess and Singh (Kabir 1983) is excellent but not complete. Many *Kabir granthavali* songs are translated in a selection by Charlotte Vaudeville (Kabir 1993). The present essay uses the transcription system for Sanskrit but does not add the diacritics except for words in parentheses or cited passages. The palatals "c" and "ch" have been rendered as "ch" and "chh", and the sibilants "ś" and "ṣ" are both rendered as "sh". The vowel "a" when silent is not written except in the cited passages.

the Nath yogis on Kabir, the extent to which Kabir intended to establish a religious tradition independent of both Islam and Hindu religion, and the extent to which he can be considered a devotee of Vishnu, a Vaishnava. Two central issues in all these discussions are the names Kabir uses for his God and how the divine reality behind these names is conceived. What are his attitudes toward the saints and heroes of Vaishnava tradition and toward the sacred texts, rituals, and social practices associated with this tradition?²

A complicating factor in all this is that even the oldest collections of Kabir's compositions likely contain compositions that his followers modified or compositions that they wrote in his name. For convenience, here I will write as if Kabir himself is the author all the compositions. Also important are the likely biases that were introduced into the collections by the editors who selected which compositions to include, an issue that will be discussed in more detail below.

Most of the many names that Kabir uses for his Supreme God are Vaishnava names, alternate names of Vishnu. Most common are the names Ram and Hari, but also used are Gopal, Govinda, Madhav, Keshav, Bhagavan, Sarangadhar, and Raghurai. Kabir sometimes mentions, directly or indirectly, the avatars of Vishnu. Krishna and king Ram Chandra are, of course, the most important avatars and are those that Kabir mentions most. In a few songs, however, he also mentions the Fish, the Tortoise, the Boar, the Dwarf, Parashuram, the Man-lion, Buddha and Kalki (Sanskrit *kalakin*) avatars. Nonetheless, Kabir usually claims that these avatars are not worthy of devotion and asserts that devotion should be directed at the Supreme God alone. In many cases, he uses names that originally denoted the avatars Krishna and Ram to denote this Supreme God. Kabir also sometimes mentions other gods like Brahma, Shiva, Indra, and Shakti, but they are never equated with the Supreme God. He rarely refers to female divinities except for Maya, a personification of all worldly delusions. Kabir also often gives his Supreme God Muslim names including Allah, Huzur, Khuda, Karim, and Rahman,³ but this usually occurs in the context of statements about the equivalence of Allah and Ram, with both the Hindu and Muslim names used to indicate the one Supreme God. Kabir is the first early bhakti poet to do this. Less specifically Vaishnava, though also Hindu, names that Kabir sometimes uses for his Supreme God are Niranjana,⁴ the Name (*nām*), the True Name (*sat-nām*), the True Guru (*sat-guru*), Para-brahma, Master (*svāmī*),

² On this last topic, see Hess (2015: 338-344); Lorenzen (1991: 32-35; 1996: 225-256).

³ Two other Muslim-linked terms that Kabir uses in several songs are *kudarat*, a term meaning "divine power," and *bismilla*, meaning "in the name of Allah." These two words are derived from Arabic and are frequently used in a Muslim context.

⁴ In the *Kabir bijak* the name Niranjana is sometimes used to refer to the god of death, also called Kal and Yama, and not to the Supreme God. In the western texts (*Kabir granthavali* and *Adi granth*), Niranjana is always used only to indicate the Supreme God.

Creator (*karatā*), Sahab, Srjanhar and Purusha. All this suggests that Kabir was a highly independent thinker but one who perhaps more resembled a Vaishnava Hindu than anything else, the identity label that most of his present day followers accept.

In a 2016 article titled “Can There Be a Vaishnava Kabir”, John Hawley suggests (p. 147) that we think of Kabir’s Vaishnavism “as ‘vulgate Vaishnavism’—something a good bit more all-embracing than the Vaishnavism propounded by some others in the world he inhabited.” The present essay attempts to show that although Kabir can be considered, in some sense, a Vaishnava, his deviation from traditional Vaishnava ideas about the avatars was truly radical and can hardly be described as constituting a vague “vulgate Vaishnavism” that was simply “a good deal more all-embracing” than the more traditional Vaishnavism of his contemporaries like Surdas and Mirabai. Sardar Jafri has proposed a contrasting view that Kabir’s religious ideas were more Muslim than Hindu, but, for one reason or another, Kabir used a Hindu vocabulary that disguised this fact (Jafri 1965: 29). This view is extreme, but it has much to recommend it.

This still leaves the initial question unanswered. How do the religious ideas of Kabir compare with other religious figures of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially with the ideas of Vaishnavas who preached the path of bhakti? The specific topic I want to look at in this essay is that of Kabir’s views about the avatars of Vishnu. The discussion will be limited to the three main older collections of Kabir’s songs and verses: the *Kabir granthavali* of Dadu Panth tradition, the *Adi granth* of the Sikhs, and the *Kabir bijak* of the Kabir Panth.⁵ The question of Kabir’s understanding of the avatars is a key indicator of the differences between his religious vision and the religious vision of Vaishnava poets and thinkers. Here I want to argue that a close reading of his views clearly shows that Kabir’s message of bhakti is more than simply a major variant of the bhakti of more orthodox bhakti of figures like Tulsidas, Surdas, Mirabai, and Chaitanya. Kabir’s bhakti is different, a difference that goes together with his radically different views on the social issue of caste and on the relation between Islam and Hindu religion.⁶

⁵ The editions mainly used here are listed in footnote 1. Other early collections that have been published and which include compositions by Kabir are those of Rajjab (2010), Gopaldas (1993), and the 1582 Fatehpur manuscript (Bahura and Bryant 1982). Also useful are the modern collection of early Kabir compositions edited by Parasnath Tivari (Kabir 1981a) and the joint collection by Jaydev Sinha and Vasudev Sinha (Kabir 1981b). These collections and editions contain many of Kabir’s compositions cited in this essay.

⁶ I deliberately avoid the use of the term “Hinduism” since it implies a doctrinal emphasis and unity that this religion does not have. See Lorenzen (1999).

In 1987 Linda Hess published an important essay comparing the three early collections of Kabir's compositions: the western *Kabir granthavali*, the western *Adi granth*, and the eastern *Kabir bijak*.⁷ In this essay, Hess listed the names for God in each of the collections and their frequency. These lists showed clearly that Vaishnava names predominate, but also that the percentage of clearly Vaishnava names for God was significantly higher in the western collections (Hess 1987: 120-21). Hess then proceeded to compare the sorts of bhakti found in the western collections and the *Bijak*. Her overall conclusion was that the bhakti of the eastern *Bijak* is quite different from that of the two western collections (Hess 1987: 140):

I have demonstrated that the two western collections of Kabir's sayings are strikingly higher than the *Bijak* in bhakti content, as indicated by language, attitudes, and themes. And I have suggested that the circumstances of transmission of pads would tend to increase devotional elements, both because they are more congenial to music than the harsher, more austere eastern style, and because bhakti—especially Krishna bhakti—dominated the regions through which the material moved. In the case of Krishna names, I have given objective evidence that they may have been added by singers as the material spread through the country.

When it came to the question of which of these two sorts of bhakti was more authentic, in the sense of representing the historical Kabir, however, Hess (1987: 141) suggested that “a proponent of each might defend him as the authentic Kabir. The reader may choose between them, or may decide that they represent two streams of tradition wherein the real Kabir is diffused like milk in water, unextractable except by some as yet unknown swan of scholarship or mystical insight.”

One obvious problem with allowing the possibility of giving equal historical plausibility to the Kabir of all three collections is the fact that the oldest manuscripts all belong to the western collections. The oldest western manuscripts belong to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, while the earliest *Bijak* manuscripts are from the early nineteenth century. On the other hand, the eastern geographical provenance of the *Bijak* places it closer to the home of Kabir in Varanasi.

Winand Callewaert (Kabir 2000) clearly prefers the western collections and bases his collection of 593 songs (*pad*) of Kabir that he regards as more authentic exclusively on the presence of the songs in early manuscripts. He rates the songs on a scale from zero to three stars according to their presence in

⁷ Hess has a more in depth and nuanced analysis of Kabir's language in her recent book *Bodies of Song* (2015: 112-148), but this does not focus on the question of the religious affiliations of the Kabir's names for God.

one or more different western manuscript traditions. Not surprisingly, Callewaert has little interest in the *Bijak* collection and even less in more recent song (*bhajan*) collections.

One important scholar who has voted strongly in favor of the *Kabir-granthavali* as the most authentic and representative collection is Purushottam Agrawal. His argument is not based primarily on the antiquity of the manuscripts, but rather on what he feels is the wide and diverse content of Kabir compositions found in the *Granthavali*. Agrawal (2009a: 217) writes:⁸

Some anthologists of manuscripts bound themselves to the limits of a certain point of view. Others, without regard to such limits, compiled their collections on the basis of scientific and objective standards. Because of its scientific and objective character, the *Granthavali* is the most authentic (*viśvanīy*) source of Kabir's compositions. For this reason, it is not enough to simply consider only the texts of the manuscripts in the context of any composition. One needs to study how to understand them in a wider context.

As noted above, one well-known aspect of the three older collections of Kabir's compositions is that each collection is associated with a particular religious group. The *Kabir bijak* is the text regarded as sacred and authoritative by several branches of the Kabir Panth. Only the Dharamdasi branch centered in Madhya Pradesh does not give the *Bijak* this exceptional status, despite the fact that several compositions in the *Bijak* show clear Dharamdasi influence.⁹ The *Kabir granthavali*, for its part, is associated with the Dadu Panth centered in Rajasthan, while the *Adi granth* is the sacred text of the Sikhs. In broad general terms, we can note that the early poets of all three religious groups regarded the Supreme God as being *nirguni* in the sense of His not having an anthropomorphic form, but that each group tended to interpret God's *nirgun* status in somewhat different ways. The Supreme God of the *Bijak* is *nirgun* in a non-personal, monistic way and shows little indication of having any personality. Dadu and his immediate followers accept that God has no physical form, but do generally regard the Supreme God as having a personality, as a loving God, a God who is more personally concerned to help

⁸ Agrawal's defense of the *Granthavali* appears in the context of a very critical discussion of Callewaert's "star system." Linda Hess (2015: 124-128) has argued that Agrawal's criticism of Callewaert is somewhat unfair and that Agrawal's defense of the *Granthavali* is overenthusiastic. Some of the problems with the *Granthavali* collection are discussed below.

⁹ The *Bijak* has in fact several slightly different versions or texts, each associated with a different branch of the Kabir Panth. The dominant version is that of the Kabir Chaura branch centered in Varanasi. On this topic, see Shukdeo Singh (Kabir 1972, 1982) The clearest indication of Dharamdasi influence in the *Bijak* appears in songs (*pad* and *ramaini*), especially at the beginning of the collection, that personify death (*kāl*, *yama*) as a god with an active will and personality rather than simply a symbol of death. In several of these songs Kal is given the name Nirranjan, a name that the western collections consistently use to refer to the impersonal Supreme God.

his devotees than the God of the *Bijak*. The Supreme God of the *Adi granth* is also *nirgun* in the sense of being without anthropomorphic form, but it does have a definite personality. In this case, however, the personal traits of God emphasized are those of His majesty and power more than His loving concern for His devotees. In a general but not rigidly exclusive way, these contrasting views of the Supreme God are reflected in the choice of which of Kabir's compositions to include made by the editors of each of the three collections.

Here I will not examine the relative historical authenticity of the three older Kabir collections. I have to side with the conclusion of Linda Hess (1987: 141) that there exist no definitive criteria to decide which of the three collections best represents the views of the historical Kabir. Rather I will look at what Kabir says about the avatars in each of the three early collections, indicate the differences of emphasis in each, and show how all three collections express views that contrast sharply with the views about the avatars found in the texts of *saguni* religious groups such as those of the followers of Surdas, Tulsidas, Vallabhachya, Chaitanya and Mirabai.

2. The *Kabir bijak*

The strongest statements against the avatars are found in the *Kabir bijak*. This is also the only early collection that directly refers to the traditional list of ten avatars. Here are four songs from the *Bijak* that each refer to groups of avatars. The first is *Bijak ramaini* 54:¹⁰

mari gaye brahmā kāsi ke vāsī | sīva sahīta muye abināsī ||
mathurā mari gaye krisan guvārā | mari mari gaye dasauṃ avatārā ||
mari mari gaye bhagati jina ṭhānī | saraguna māṃ jina niraguna ānī ||
sākhī - nātha machhaṃdara nā chhuṭe, gorakha dattā vyāsa |
kahaṃ kabīra pukāri ke, pare kāla kī phāṃsa ||

Brahma has died and also Shiva,
the Lord of Kashi.
Even the never perishing [Vishnu]
has also died.

¹⁰ All *Kabir Bijak* quotes are from Kabir (1965). The translations are all my own. The italicized passages in the translations are the refrains.

Krishna the cowherd of Mathura
has also died.
All ten avatars have died
one by one.

One by one those who established
bhakti have died.
[Dead] are those who found the Nirgun
within the Sagun.¹¹

The Nath Matsyendra has not escaped.
Nor Gorakh, Dattatreya, Vyas.
Kabir calls out and tells us this:
They all were caught in the snare of Death (*kāl*).

The second song is *Bijak ramaini* 75. This is the only one of the four songs to appear in one of the other collections. It mentions eight of the ten avatars in no particular order:¹²

tihi sāhaba ke lāgahu sāthā | dui dukha meṭi ke hohu sanāthā ||
dasaratha kula avatari nahim āyā | nahim laṃkā ke rāva satāyā ||
nahim devaki ke garabhahim āyā | nahim jasodā goda khelāyā ||
prithamī ramana damana nahim kariyā | paiṭhi patāla nahim bali chhaliyā ||
nahim balirāja se māṃḍala rārī | nahim hiranākusa badhal pachhārī ||
hoya barāha dharani nahim dhariyā | chhatrī māri nichhatri na kariyā ||
nahim gobaradhana kara gahi dhariyā |
nahim gvālana saṃga bana bana phiriyā ||
gaṃḍaka sāligarāma na silā | machchha kachchha hoyā nahim jalā hīlā ||
dvārāvati śarīra na chhāṃḍā | lai jaganātha piṃḍa nahim gāḍā ||
sākhī -- kahaṃhiṃ kabīra pukāri ke, vā patha mati bhūla |
jihī rākhe anumāna kai, thūla nahim asthūla ||

Attach yourself to the side of the Lord (*sāhab*).

¹¹ The sense of this line is somewhat dubious and the readings of the original text are not uniform. Other possible translations are “Sagun [bhakti] has been erased and Nirgun has come” and “Sagun is the mother from whom Nirgun has come.”

¹² This *Bijak ramaini* 75 is roughly equivalent to *Kabir granthavali ramaini* no. 6.9 (Kabir 1968: 184-185).

Erase your sorrows and find the Protector (*nāthā*).

He never descended into Dasharath's clan.¹³

He never oppressed the king of Lanka.

He never entered Devaki's womb.¹⁴

He never played in Yashoda's lap.

He never roamed the earth to kill,

Nor dived to hell, nor tricked king Bali.¹⁵

He never battled with Bali for the world.

Nor crushed and killed Hiranyakashipu.¹⁶

He did not become Varaha to raise up the earth.

He did not kill Kshatriyas until all were gone.

He did not hold Govardhan Hill in his hand.

He did not roam the woods with all the cowherds.¹⁷

Ram is not a Shalagram stone from the Gandak,

Nor a fish or tortoise swimming in water.

He never left his body at Dvaraka.

Nor was he ever buried at Jagannath.¹⁸

Kabir calls out and says to all:

Don't forget the path.

Keep Him in mind, He is neither

Solid nor subtle.

¹³ This line and the next refer to the avatar Ram Chandra, victor over the demon Ravan of Lanka.

¹⁴ This line and the next refer to the avatar Krishna. His birth mother was Devaki and his foster mother was Yashoda.

¹⁵ These two lines refer to the avatar Parashuram (Ram with the axe) who roamed the earth killing Kshatriyas, to the avatar Varaha (the Boar) who dived to the bottom of the ocean to rescue the earth on his tusk, and to the avatar Vaman (the Dwarf), who tricked king Bali into giving away the earth.

¹⁶ A reference to the Man-lion avatar.

¹⁷ Repeat references to the Boar, Parashurama, and Krishna.

¹⁸ The Shalagram stone is a type of fossil said to represent Vishnu. Krishna died at Dvaraka. One story claims that his bones were put inside a log that eventually floated to Puri in Orissa. There the log was carved into the image of Vishnu known as Jagannath, Lord of the famous Puri temple.

The third song is *Bijak shabda* 18. It mentions eight avatars including Buddha and Kalki (Sanskrit: *kalakin*), the ninth and tenth avatars in the traditional list of ten. Here the name used for Kalki is Nikalanki (*nikalaṅkī*, Sanskrit: *niḥkalaṅka* or *niḥkalaṅkin*) meaning “without stain” or “pure”. This same name is used for Kalki in the next song presented here (*Bijak shabda* 8). The name Nikalanki is also the name used for Kalki by the poets of Ismaili Islam (discussed below). Here is *Bijak shabda* 18:

rāma guna nyāro nyāro nyāro |
abujhā loga kahāṃ lauṃ būjhaiṃ, būjhanihāra vichāro ||
kete rāmachaṃdra tapasī se, jina yaha jaga viṭamāyā |
kete kānha bhaye muralīdhara, tina bhī aṃta na pāyā ||
machchha kachchha au brāha sarūpī, vāmana nāma dharāyā |
kete baudha nikalaṅkī kete, tina bhī aṃta na pāyā ||
kete sidha sādhaḥka saṃnyāsī, jina banabāsa basāyā |
kete munijana gorakha kahiye, tina bhī aṃta na pāyā ||
jākī gati brahmau nahīṃ jānai, śiva sanakādika hāre |
tāke guna nala kaise paihau, kahaṃhiṃ kabīra pukāre ||

Ram’s virtues (*gun*) are separate, apart.

How far can fools understand?

Whoever can understand should think.

By penance many became Ram Chandra,
 But this our world would lead them astray.¹⁹
 Many became Krishnas (*kānha*) holding a flute,
 But they could never find the end.

And some took the form of the Fish, Turtle,
 Or Boar, or took the name of the Dwarf.
 Many became Buddha, many Kalki.
 But they could never find the end.

¹⁹ The meaning of the word here translated as “led astray” (*biṭamāyā*) is uncertain. In *Kabir bijak, shabda* 115, it clearly means “led astray”. The commentator Vichardas (Kabir 1965: 115), however, takes the word to mean “protected” (*surakṣit kiyā*).

Many became Siddhas, Sadhus, Sannyasis,
And lived apart, their home the forest.
Many became sages, with names like Gorakh,
But they could never find the end.

Brahma never could know His essence.
Shiva and Sanaka failed as well.
Kabir calls out and says to all:
How can anyone grasp His virtues?

The fourth song, *Bijak shabda* 8, again goes through the list of ten avatars, with descriptions of each, including the last two of the list, Buddha and Kalki. The refrain, the first two verses and last two verses of this rather long song should suffice to show its main argument:

*saṃto āvai jāya so māyā
hai pratipāla kāla nahim vāke, nā kahum gayā na āyā ||
kyā makasūda machchha kachha honā, saṃkhāsura na saṃghārā |
hai dayāla droha nahim vāke, kahahu kavana ko mārā ||
[...]
vai karatā nahim bhaye nikalaṃki, nahim kaliṅgahiṃ mārā |
ī chhala bala sabha māyai kīnhā, jatta satta sabha ṭārā ||
dasa avatāra īsarī māyā, karatā kai jina pūjā |
kahaṃhiṃ kabīra sunahu ho santo, upajai khapai so dujā ||*

What comes and goes, that is Maya.

Death is apart from our Protector,
He who never comes nor goes.

He has no reason to take
The form of either a fish or a turtle.
He never killed Shankhasur.²⁰
He is full of compassion and has no hate.

²⁰ Shankhasur was a demon killed by Vishnu in his Fish avatar.

Tell me, who did he ever kill?

[....]

The Creator never became Kalki,²¹
 He never killed the [demon] Kalinga.
 Maya created all this illusion,
 And led astray the good and the holy.

The ten avatars are the goddess Maya,
 But are worshipped as if the Creator.
 Kabir says: Sants, listen to me.
 Those that live and die are second (dujā).

All four of these songs clearly criticize people's faith in, and devotion to, the ten avatars of Vishnu. In two songs (*Bijak ramaini* 54 and *Bijak shabda* 8) he specifically uses the phrase "ten avatars (*dasauṃ avatārā, dasa avatāra*). In *Bijak shabda* 8 he mentions each of the ten. In *Bijak ramaini* 75 and in *shabda* 18 he mentions eight of the ten. The historical origin of this list of ten avatars is not certain. The *Bhagavata-purana*, the most important Sanskrit source for Vaishava religion in North India in Kabir's time, does not use this scheme of ten avatars. It instead refers to a larger list of full and partial avatars. Nonetheless, the scheme of ten avatars was definitely in place by the time of the Sanskrit poet Kshemendra (c. 990-c. 1070) who wrote a text titled *Dashavatara-charita* (Kshemendra n.d.). Kabir's use of this ten-avatar scheme may have a connection to Ismaili Islam as is discussed below.

In *Bijak ramaini* 54, Kabir claims that all the avatars were mortal and subject to the power of death. Even the Imperishable (*abināsi*), or Vishnu, died like all the rest. The famous Nath yogis Matsyendra and Gorakh and the sages Dattatreya and Vyasa muni also died. In *ramaini* 75, Kabir almost claims that the avatars never existed. A better reading, however, would be that Kabir is asserting that the Supreme, *nirgun* God that he worships is different and apart from all the avatars. The avatars are mere mortal beings, not incarnations of Kabir's Supreme God. In *shabda* 18, Kabir adds the claim that the avatars and various sages have all been reborn countless times in previous ages or yugas, but all failed to understand the virtues or nature of the Supreme God. Here, as elsewhere in Kabir's compositions, this Supreme God is called Ram. None of these gods and sages could "find the end" (*aṃta na pāyā*). In this

²¹ The original text has Nikalanki.

song, Kabir clearly distinguishes this Supreme and non-anthropomorphic Ram from the human Ram Chandra, the hero of the *Ramayana*, whom Kabir names in the second verse.²²

Several other songs in the *Kabir bijak* criticize people's faith in one or other of the avatars, most notably Krishna. *Ramaini* 45 opens with a verse naming famous figures who are now "gone": "Hiranyakashipu, Ravana, and Kansa are gone. Gone are Krishna (*krisna*) and the families of gods, men, and sages. Brahma is gone, who knew not the essence (*maram*). All the great, wise ones are gone. They could not understand Ram's story (*rām-kahānī*)."²³ Here the word "gone" (*gau, gae, gayal*) implies "dead" as in *ramaini* 54. The Ram of "Ram's story" has to be Kabir's Supreme God, not the hero of the *Ramayan*, although the reference is admittedly ambiguous. *Shabda* 12 mentions a large number of legendary sages and religious heroes who were "drunk" (*matavāle*) with the "nectar of love" (*prem-sudha-ras*). The only god or avatar specifically mentioned is Krishna: "Sagun Brahman was drunk in Brindavan". Here the reference to Krishna is a positive one, but it incorporates Krishna in a long list of legendary, but human sages, and identifies him specifically as a manifestation of *sagun* Brahman, not the Supreme *nirgun* Ram. A much more negative reference to Krishna appears in the *Bijak* composition Chachar 1. This text is directed against Maya, the goddess of worldly delusions (*mohani*). The last verse states: "Indra and Krishna (*krisna*) stood at her door, their eyes filled with desire. Kabir says: Only those were saved who were not filled with delusion (*moh*)."

As noted above, the references in the *Kabir bijak* to a list of ten avatars suggest a speculative but possible connection between Kabir's ideas and the ideas of some unorthodox Muslim intellectuals. Sometime before Kabir wrote his songs and verses, the Hindu idea of the ten avatars of Vishnu was modified and incorporated into the cosmology of the Ismaili Muslims, particularly those of a group called the Sat Panth. The early poets of this group composed songs called *ginans*, that are similar in many respects to the songs of Kabir and other nirguni poets. In these *ginans*, the scheme of ten avatars has an important place.²⁴ This topic will be discussed in more detail in an article I am working on with Imre Bangha.

²² Kabir's differentiation of his Supreme, *nirgun* Ram and the avatar Ram of the *Ramayana* is, in some texts, admittedly ambiguous, but another *Bijak* song that makes the difference clear is *shabda* 109. The second line says: "All the three worlds know the son of Dasharatha [i.e. Ram Chandra]. The essence (*maram*) of Ram's Name is different (*ānā*) from this."

²³ The initial refrain of this *shabda* reappears as the refrain of *shabda* 45 of the *Kabir granthavali*. This latter text, however, has only one verse besides the refrain and seems more a fragment of a song than a full song. This one verse does not mention Krishna. It says: "(A person's) dust is absorbed in dust, his air is absorbed in air. Kabir says: Everyone can see that the form dies." Was the rest of this song, including the reference to the death of Krishna, censored out of this song?

²⁴ On this topic, see especially Shackle and Moir 2000, Kassam (1995), and Khakee (1972).

Here it should suffice to note that in the Ismaili scheme each of the ten avatars has a specific demon opponent. Most of these are obvious enough: Narsimha the Man-lion has Hiranyakashipu, Rama has Ravana, Krishna has Kamsa, Vamana the Dwarf has king Bali. Two of the lesser known demons are Shankhasura, who corresponds to the Fish (Matsya) avatar, and Kalingo or Kalinga, who corresponds to the final Kalki avatar. In *Bijak shabda* 8, both Shankasur and Kalinga are specifically mentioned. It is also noteworthy that the name for Kalki as given in *Bijak shabdas* 8 and 18 is Nikalanki. Nikalanki or Nakalanki is precisely the name used for Kalki in the Ismaili *ginans*. Several of the Ismaili *ginan* authors who used this ten avatar scheme, most notably Pir Shams, lived before Kabir, although some of the *ginans* attributed to them may come from a later period. Another Muslim author, a Chishti sufi, who adopted the figure of Kalki as the world-destroyer at the end of the Kali Yuga was ‘Abd al-Rahman Chishti (d.1638).²⁵

3. Kabir in the *Adi granth*

The earliest manuscripts containing Kabir songs and verses are the so-called Mohan Pothis, Sikh collections that were assembled in the early 1570s, although the extant manuscripts may be later copies. Most of these songs and verses were eventually incorporated into the *Adi granth*. A final selection was made by the fifth Sikh leader, Guru Arjan (1563-1606), in the early version of the *Adi granth* known as the Kartarpur Vir of 1604. The only direct evidence of the criteria used for the selection and edition of Kabir’s compositions in the Mohan Pothis and the *Adi granth* are the resulting collections themselves. The discussion here in this essay will center on the role of the avatars in the Kabir texts found in the *Adi granth*. Nonetheless, a few more general comments may be useful.

The best academic scholar currently writing in English about the history and contents of the *Adi granth* is Pashaura Singh.²⁶ Unfortunately, his discussions about Kabir depend on several unlikely hypotheses. First, he suggests that Kabir died in about the year 1448. This date he explicitly takes from Parashuram Chaturvedi and Charlotte Vaudeville (Singh 2003: 82). This date is much too early. It is based on early dates proposed for Kabir’s guru Ramananda and on a claimed reading of a lost and never documented inscription from Magahar, the site of Kabir’s death. Elsewhere I have shown why the abundant evidence for Kabir’s death sometime around his traditional death date of 1518 CE—evidence that includes the religious genealogies of Anantadas and Nabhadadas and also several historical

²⁵ See the discussion of this unorthodox Muslim thinker’s cosmology in Alam (2015).

²⁶ See P. Singh (2003, 2000, 2006).

synchronisms—is much stronger (Lorenzen 1991: 9-18). Purushottam Agrawal's (2009b) more recent essay explaining how the early date for Ramananda is a scholarly hoax, shows that Kabir's early death date of 1448 is simply impossible.

A second problem with Pashaura Singh's discussion of Kabir is that he attempts to minimize Kabir's role in the creation of the *nirguni* Sant movement and then claims that in any case there is no evidence that Guru Nanak had ever heard any of Kabir's compositions. Singh (2003: 87) writes that "like most of the poet-saints of the Adi Granth, Kabir's thought is firmly rooted in the teachings of the Sant tradition of northern India." But Kabir's thought is not *rooted* in Sant tradition. Kabir's thought is the original root and foundation of Sant tradition.²⁷ The only major religious poet who influenced Kabir was Namdev, whom he mentions. But Namdev's songs lack Kabir's biting criticism of Hindu and Muslim social and religious practices; Kabir's emphasis on a formless, *nirgun* God; and Kabir's identification of *nirgun* Ram and Muslim Allah. There are no *nirguni* Sants, no Sant tradition, before Kabir. Virtually all later *nirguni* Sants, most notably those in the Dadu Panth, acknowledge Kabir's foundational primacy.

Singh's denial of any influence of Kabir on Guru Nanak (1469-1539) is also improbable, though here he is following in the footsteps of another fine scholar of early Sikh history, W. H. McLeod. Singh plausibly notes (2003: 85) that "even if the traditional date of Kabir's death 1518 is accepted as factual, there is no sound evidence to suggest that Guru Nanak ever met Kabir." True enough, but Singh's and McLeod's further claim that Guru Nanak did not know any of the compositions of Kabir is not so plausible. Singh writes (2003: 86):

In the first place, Guru Nanak does not mention Kabir in his works. Secondly, he does not comment on any verse of Kabir as he does in the case of Shaikh Farid. Thus there seems to be no reasonable ground to assert the Guru Nanak was familiar with Kabir's works, and one must look elsewhere for the inclusion of Kabir in the Adi Granth .

But if Kabir died in 1518, he died more than twenty years before Nanak. The inclusion of Kabir songs in the Mohan Pothis of the early 1570s, likely prepared by the Sikh Guru Amar Das, provide clear evidence that certainly by this date Kabir's songs and verses were well known in the Punjab and likely all over North India. Even though Guru Nanak died in 1539, some thirty-three years earlier, it seems unlikely that he did not know many of Kabir's songs and verses. The evident aim of this minimizing of Kabir's

²⁷ It is possible that here Pashaura Singh is including early *saguni* poets who composed songs in early Hindi, most notably Namdev and Surdas, in the category of Sants, but this would be unusual. The term "Sant" normally refers to *nirguni* poets of early Hindi beginning with Kabir and Raidas.

importance and denial of his influence on Guru Nanak is to exalt Guru Nanak and to claim that the conceptual universe of Nanak's compositions is completely original and is not derived, even partially, from Kabir. The only answer can be that Amar Das and Arjan looked into the past to find compositions that anticipated some of the independently conceived ideas of Nanak and found those by Kabir and some other earlier poets and then included a selection of these compositions by Kabir and the others in the Sikh collections. This is not believable. Kabir's compositions—like those of Namdev and the other *bhagats* included in the *Adi Granth*—were almost certainly a vital part of the religious life of north-western India well before Guru Nanak and must have been well-known to him.

Returning to the topic of the avatars, Kabir's compositions in the Sikh *Adi granth* mostly do not follow the *Kabir bijak* strategy of minimizing the status of the avatars by claiming that they were subject to the power of death like ordinary mortal beings. Nor does the *Adi granth* include any of Kabir songs that list all or most of the avatars. Despite the fact that the Sikh Gurus were themselves advocates of a Supreme *nirgun* form of God, the editors of the *Adi granth* include a few songs and verses attributed to Kabir that feature positive depictions of the avatar Krishna. In addition, the invocations of the God Ram in Kabir's *Adi granth* songs are sometimes phrased in a way that makes it difficult to say if the *nirgun* Supreme God is being invoked or the avatar Ram.

Here is one of the Kabir songs from the *Adi granth* that gives a positive view of the avatar Krishna. It should be noted, however, that the main purpose of the song is not to praise Krishna, who in fact is never explicitly named. Its main purpose is to affirm that God treats the devotion of common people with special favor. Vidura's simple offerings to Krishna are said to be better than those of a wealthy king (Duryodhana). Vidura, not Krishna, is the central figure of the song (*Adi granth*, p. 1104, no. 9):

rājana ka.unu tumārai āvai |
eso bhā.u bidara ko dekhio ohu garību mohi bhāvai || rahā.u ||
hasatī dekhi bharama te bhūlā sri bhagavānu na jāniā |
tumaro dūdhu bidara ko pānho aṃmritu kari mai māniā ||
khīra samāni sāgu mai pā.iā guna gāvata raini bihāni |
kabīra ko thākuru anada binodī jāti na kāhū kī māni ||

O king, who will come to you?
 I look rather to Vidur's love,
 This poor man, he pleases me.

Looking at your elephants you forgot.

You failed to recognize the Lord.
Compared to the milk you offer, for me
Vidur's water is made into nectar.

Instead of the sweet pudding you offer,
I prefer to sample Vidur's spinach.
From dusk to dawn we sing his praises.
Says Kabir: The Lord is happily playing.
Vidur's caste is of no concern.

One popular type of devotional song is put in the voice of a woman who longs for her absent lover or husband. The usual model for such songs is the longing of the female cowherds, or *gopis*, of Brindavan for the cowherd Krishna. Such songs in the *viraha* (separation) mode are, as one would expect, particularly favored by *saguni* poets like Surdas and Mirabai. They are absent in the *Kabir bijak*,²⁸ but four are found among Kabir's songs in the *Adi granth* and a larger number in the *Kabir granthavali*.²⁹ I will discuss this topic in more detail below in relation to this latter text. Three of the *Adi granth* songs mostly in the *viraha* mode use other names of Vishnu, not Krishna, for the separated male lover.

In the first *Adi granth* song (p. 327, no. 21), the refrain, apparently put in the words of an abandoned woman, says: "The person who feels it knows pain. Bhakti to Ram is a sharp arrow."³⁰ A second *Adi granth* song (p. 337, no. 65) also calls the separated lover Ram. In the refrain, the woman says to a crow that she wants it to be her messenger: "Why, crow, do you not fly off, so that I can meet my own dear Ram." A third *Adi granth* song (p. 483, no. 30) begins: "I beautified myself to meet him, but Hari, the Gosain Jagjivan, never came." None of these three songs calls the woman's lover Krishna. The fourth *Adi granth* song (p. 338, no. 66), however, clearly refers to Krishna. Here is the complete song:³¹

²⁸ Linda Hess notes for me, however, that there are several single verses (*sākhī*) in the *Bijak* in the *viraha* mode (nos. 73, 97, 98, 99).

²⁹ The four *Adi granth* songs are those (1) on p. 327, no. 21; (2) on p. 337, no. 65; (3) on p. 483, no. 30; and (4) on p. 338, no. 66. Three of these songs have somewhat similar versions in the *Kabir granthavali*, namely: (1) Kabir (1968, no. 118; 2000, no. 126); (2) Kabir (2000, no. 541; no *granthavali* version); (3) Kabir (1968, no. 117; 2000, no. 253; this song also similar to *Kabir bijak*, *shabda* no. 35); and (4) Kabir (1968: no. 76; 2000: no. 60).

³⁰ Whether or not this song can be classed in the *viraha* mode is somewhat doubtful since there is no clear indication that the devotee is waiting for her lover.

³¹ Two lines of this song (1 and 5) are found, with some changes, in a longer song in the *Kabir granthavali* (Kabir 1968: no. 76, lines 11 and 12). Callewaert found several versions of the *Granthavali* text in early western manuscripts and includes these versions together with the *Adi granth* song as a single song in his *Millennium Kabir* collection (Kabir 2000: no. 60). Whether both the *Adi granth* song and the *Kabir granthavali* song are versions of the same song, however, is questionable. The *Granthavali*

āsa pāsa ghana turasī kā biravā mājha banārasī gā.ūṃ re |
 uā kā sarūpu dekhi mohī guārani mo ka.u chhoḍi na ā.u na jāhū re ||
 tohi charana manu lāgo sārīṃgadhara so milai jo baḍabhāgo || rahā.u ||
 biṃdrābana mana harana manohara krisana charāvata gā.ū re |
 jā kā ṭhākuru tuhī sārīṃgadhara mohi kabīrā nā.ū re ||

All around were tulasi plants
 In the middle of Banaras village.
 His beauty stole the cowherds' hearts:
 "Don't go and leave us here."

"This mind of mine is tied to your feet.
 Those you meet are blessed.
 O Sarangadhar.

Krishna the enchanter lives in Brindavan.
 He grazes the village cows.
 He whose Master is you alone,
 Is me, Kabir by name,
 O Sarangadhar.

Returning to other songs in the *Adi granth* that mention the avatars of Vishnu, two of the most detailed both provide criticisms of the avatar doctrine, albeit less direct ones than those of the *Kabir bijak*. The first song describes Krishna as "Nanda's son". A version of the song is also found in the *Kabir granthavali*. The message of the song is that Kabir worships the Supreme God, here called Niranjana, who is above and beyond the avatars:³²

lakha cha.urāsīha jā joni mahi bhramata naṃdu bahu thāko re |
 bhagati hetī avatāru līo hai bhāgu baḍo bapurā ko re ||
 tumha ju kahata ha.u naṃda ko naṃdanu naṃda su naṃdanu kāko re |

song is considerably longer and is written in the style of a nonsensical "up-side down language" song. The *Adi granth* song is not.

³² *Adi granth*: p. 338-39, no. 70. The *Kabir granthavali* version is Kabir (1968: no. 48; 2000: no. 172). Although the order of the lines is different, the contents of the *Kabir granthavali* and the *Adi granth* versions are mostly equivalent.

dharani akāsu daso disa nāhī taba ihu naṃdu kahā tho re || rahā.u ||
saṃkaṭi nahī parai joni nahī āvai nāmu niraṃjana jā ko re |
kabīra ko suāmī aiso ṭhākuru jā kai mā.ī na bāpo re ||

First he wandered from womb to womb
Through many thousand births,
Then Nanda stopped exhausted.
Through bhakti, the avatar appeared
Poor Nanda got some luck.

You tell us He was Nanda's son,
But whose son was Nanda?
Before there was earth, before there was sky,
Before the ten directions,
Where was Nanda then?

He who has the name Niranjan
Never falls into danger
Or enters any womb.
Kabir's Master is the one Lord
Without any father or mother.

The second *Adi granth* song directly mentions Vamana (the dwarf) avatar and indirectly alludes to Ram Chandra (through Ravan) and Krishna (through the defeat of Duryodhan) as well as various major gods. There is also a version of this song in the *Kabir granthavali*. All of the avatars and gods are said to have appeared millions of times in earlier cycles of time. All of them are thus less than Kabir's Supreme God. Here this God is again called Sarangapani, originally a name of Ram Chandra. The full song has eight stanzas plus a refrain. Here are verse 1, the refrain, and verses 7 and 8:³³

koṭi sūrajā kai paraḡāsa | koṭi mahādeva aru kabilāsa |
duraḡā koṭi jā ke maradanu karai | brahamā koṭi beda ucharai ||
ja.u jācha.u ta.u kevala rāma āna deva siu nāhī kāma || rahā.u ||

³³ *Adi granth*: p. 1162, no. 20. The *Kabir granthavali* version is Kabir (1968: no 340). In Callewaert's *Millennium Kabir* (Kabir 2000), the song is no. 397. There are many differences among the different versions, but the general argument is the same.

[...]

*bāvana koṭi jākai romāvali | rāvana sainā jaha te chhalī |
sahasa koṭi bahu kahata purāna | durajodhana kā mathiā mānu ||
kaṁdrapa koṭi jā kai lavai na dharahi | aṁtara aṁtari manasā harahi |
kahi kabīra suni sārīṅgapāna | dehi abhai padu māṁga.u dāna ||*

He has the light of Millions of suns,
Millions of Mahadevas and Kailash mountains.
Millions of Durgas massage his feet.
Millions of Brahmas recite the Vedas.

Ram alone is all I ask for.
I have nothing to do with other gods.

His hairs are made of millions of Vamanas.
His ringlets are made of Ravan’s armies.
He embodies thousands of millions of those
who Puranas say broke Duryodhan’s pride.³⁴

He has millions of Kamas, never restrained,
Who seize the mind inside the body.
Kabir says: Listen, Sarangapani:
I beg for the gift to be not afraid.

4. The *Kabir granthavali*

As Purushottam Agrawal has noted (2009a: 217; cited above), the *Kabir granthavali* contains a much more inclusive and varied collection of Kabir compositions than either the *Kabir bijak* or the *Adi granth*, each of which was evidently edited to highlight a certain religious and social point of view. This does not mean, however, that the Kabir compositions in the *Kabir granthavali* are more authentic in the sense of

³⁴ This stanza is difficult to translate. The *Kabir granthavali* (no. 340) version of the verse is clearer and adds a reference to the avatar Parashuram. It reads: “He has numberless lines of Yamas (*jaṁmāvali*); from him the armies of Ravan fled; he took the life of Sahasra-bahu [killed by Parashuram]; he lay waste the tents of Duryodhan.” The somewhat unexpected mention of Duryodhan here suggests another connection with the ten avatars of the Ismaili Muslims since in their scheme Duryodhan is the demon who corresponds to the Buddha avatar.

more likely to be compositions of the historical Kabir. It seems reasonable to assume that the *Kabir granthavali* collection was at least as open to including compositions not actually by the historical Kabir as were the other two early collections.

What do the Kabir compositions in the *Kabir granthavali* have to say about Krishna and the other avatars? In general, the *Kabir granthavali* is more open to a *saguni* Vaishnava point of view than either the *Kabir bijak* or the Kabir compositions in the *Adi granth*. On the other hand, the *Kabir granthavali*, unlike the *Adi granth*, also includes several songs expressing opposition to the adoration of Vishnu's avatars. A good introduction to the wide range of opinions regarding the avatars and other issues is found in the introduction to Mataprasad Gupta's introduction to his edition of the *Kabir granthavali* (Kabir 1969: n.b. 36-58).

The Vaishnava influence in the *Kabir granthavali*—as also in the *Kabir bijak* and the Kabir compositions in the *Adi granth*—mostly takes the form of using Vaishnava names for the Supreme God. Several of these names refer originally to Krishna, but are most often used by Kabir to designate the Supreme God. The chief examples are the names Govind, Gopal and Madhav. Direct references to the Krishna avatar more often use more specific names such Govardhanadhar, Mohan, Kanha, and Krishna. In similar fashion Kabir most often uses the name Ram to designate the *nirgun* Supreme God, although in a few compositions he refers to Ram the avatar.

There are several songs in the *Kabir granthavali* that refer to the avatars.³⁵ The *Adi granth* versions of two of the songs have been translated above.³⁶ One song singled out by Hess (1987: 125) invokes Vishnu, here Vitthal, as “the mind's Enchanter” (*man ke mohan*), Manmohan and Mohan being names of Krishna. The song begins with this refrain: “O Manmohan, Vitthal, my mind holds fast to you.”³⁷ Here and in most other invocations of Krishna or Ram in these songs, the legendary adventures of these avatars are not their central topic. One noteworthy exception, however, refers to several incidents in the life of the Ram avatar:³⁸

hai hari bhajana kau paravāṃna |
nīṃcha pāvaiṃ ūṃcha padavī, bājate nīsāṃna || ṭeka ||

³⁵ These include Kabir (1968: nos. 17, 31, 35, 78, 104, 301, 327, 334, 336, 382, 392). These songs correspond to Kabir (2000: nos. 24, 33, 36, 118, 110, 377, 396, 422, 430, 468, 471).

³⁶ *Adi granth* songs (1) pp. 338-39, no. 70, and (2) p. 1162, no. 20; corresponding to the *Kabir granthavali* songs (1) Kabir (1968: no. 48) and (2) Kabir (1968: no. 340).

³⁷ Kabir (1968: no. 4; 2000: no. 4). In manuscript 4A the line reads: *man ke mohan viṭhalā | yahu man lāgau tohi*.

³⁸ Kabir (1968: no. 301; 2000: no. 377).

bhajana kau paratāpa aiso, tire jala pāṣāna |
adhama bhīla ajāti ganikā, chaḍhe jāta bivāṃna ||
nava lakha tārā chalaṃ maṃḍala, chalaṃ sasihara bhāṃna |
dāsa dhū kauṃ aṭala padavī, rāṃma kaiṃ dīvāṃna ||
nigama jākī sākhi bolaiṃ, kahaiṃ saṃta sujāṃna |
jana kabīra terī sarani āyau, rākhi lehu bhagavāṃna ||

The worship of Hari is our passport.

The lowly reach a high position.

They play the big drum.

The power of this worship is such

that a stone will float on water.

The lowly Bhil and the casteless whore

were taken up on his car.

Ninety thousand stars, the moon,

and the sun move in the sky.

But the servant Dhruv will never move

In Ram's royal court.

The noble Sants speak the words

that the holy texts declare.

Devoted Kabir has come for refuge.

Please, Lord, Protect me

The central point here is the low social status of the three persons praised in this song. They are all victims of social prejudice who win Ram's favor. The tribal Bhil woman, or Shabari, offers Ram some fruit she has tasted and he accepts it. The prostitute (*ganikā*) teaches her parrot to say Ram's name and inadvertently wins a place in heaven. Dhruv is a prince but is rejected by his father. He becomes an ascetic devotee of Vishnu and eventually is raised up to heaven as the unmoving pole star.³⁹

³⁹ The story of the Bhil woman is told in both Valmiki's *Ramayana* and Tulsidas's *Ram-charit-manas*. See Lutgendorf (2001). The story of Dhruv is prominent in the *Bhagavata-purana*. It is a favorite of *nirguni* story tellers such as Jan Gopal. See Lorenzen (2020). There are legendary stories about at least two prostitute devotees of Ram. The most popular is about the prostitute with the parrot. The prostitute is often invoked in *nirguni* literature, but the ultimate sources of the story are not identifiable.

In the *Bhagavata-purana* and other texts, Prahlad is a devotee of Vishnu who is persecuted by his father, the demon Hiranyakashipu. Prahlad is eventually saved by the Man-lion avatar, who kills Prahlad's father. Prahlad is often invoked in Kabir's compositions, though the man-lion avatar is rarely mentioned. The story is also a favorite of *nirguni* authors such as Jan Gopal. Both the *Kabir granthavali* and the *Adi granth* contain versions of one song with a full summary of Prahlad's story. I have discussed the Prahlad story, its diffusion, and its social implications elsewhere.⁴⁰ Here is the final verse of Kabir's song, the only verse to directly mention the Man-lion:⁴¹

mahāpuruṣa devādhideva | narasyaṅgha prakāṣa kiyau bhagati bheva ||
kahai kabīra koī lahai na pāra | prahilāda ūbāryau aneka bāra ||

The Supreme Being, the highest God,
Became the Man-lion (*narasyaṅgha*) for bhakti.
Kabir says: No one can reach His limits.
Time and again He rescued Prahlad.

The special category of songs in the *viraha* or separation mode, noted above, use the love of a woman for her absent lover as metaphor for the love of the devotee for his or her God. Often the woman is identified as one of the female cowherds or gopis who long for the absent Krishna. In an essay on the Dadu Panth poet Jan Gopal, I have discussed *viraha* songs as expressions of devotion to a hidden God or *deus absconditus*, a God who refuses to reveal Himself to His devotee (Lorenzen 2020: 147-149). In the case of Kabir, the metaphor of the Krishna and gopis had to confront the obstacle of Kabir's reluctance to equate the avatars with his formless, non-anthropomorphic Supreme God.

This obstacle has two related consequences. The first is that Kabir's *viraha* mode songs are relatively few among the over six-hundred songs in the three older collections. The second is that the *viraha* songs that are included in these collections make sparing use of direct allusions to Krishna and the gopis. In the *Kabir bijak*, not surprisingly, there are almost no songs, either *ramainis* or *shabdās*, that can be considered *viraha* songs. In the *Adi granth*, there are only a few Kabir songs in the *viraha* mode. Most have been discussed above. In the *Kabir granthavali*, as one might expect, *viraha* songs are slightly

⁴⁰ See Lorenzen (1996: 15-35; 2020). The former text also includes an edition and translation of Jan Gopal's *Prahlad charitra* (pp. 37-149).

⁴¹ Kabir (1968: no. 379; 2000: no. 459). The *Adi granth* version is on p. 1194, no. 4. The first quarter verse reads: *mahāpuruṣ devādhidev*.

more common.⁴² In these songs, however, the missing divine lover only two or three times given a specific name or epithet of Krishna, and references to the Brindavan village, the gopis, or their famous dance (*rās-līlā*) with Krishna are absent. The most common name given to the missing lover is Ram, who is not necessarily to be identified with the avatar Ram. Here as an example is one song that uses the name Ram twice and Murari (Krishna) once:⁴³

*tumha bina rāṃma kavana saum̃ kahiye |
lāgī choṭa bahuta dukha sahiye || ṭeka ||
bedhyau jīva biraha kai bhālai | rāti divasa mere ura sālai ||
ko jāṃnaiṃ mere tana kī pīrā | satagura sabada bahi gayau sarīrā || ||
tumha se baida na hamase rogī | upajī bithā kaisaiṃ jīvaiṃ viyogī ||
nisa bāsuri mohi citavata jāī | ajahūṃ na ā.i mile rāṃmarāī ||
kahata kabīra hama kaum̃ dukha bhārī | bina darasana kyūṃ jīvaiṃ murārī ||*

Parted from you, Ram, to whom can I talk?
The wound you gave is causing terrible pain.

The spear of separation (viraha) has pierced my soul.
Day and night my breast is filled with pain
Who can know the pain my body feels?
The Guru's word has flowed into my body.

You are the doctor, no one is sicker than I,
With the distress I feel, how can I live apart.
Day and night I look for you, O Ram.
But again today you failed to come and meet me.

Kabir says: My pain is heavy.

⁴² Three *Kabir granthavali* songs in the *viraha* mode that also have *Adi granth* versions are cited above in footnote 18. Other *Kabir granthavali* songs mostly in this *viraha* mode include those of Kabir (1968: nos. 77, 230, 287, 284, 302, 305, 306, 307, 117, 360). These correspond to Kabir (2000: nos. 61, 258, 348, 332, 354, 356, 358, 357, 253, 416). The names and epithets used for the God in these latter songs include the following: Kanha, Madan-mohan, Murari, Ram (8 times), Hari (4 times), Jagannath, Madhav (2 times), Vallabh, Purush, *gosain* (2 times), *svami*, *satagur*, and *baid*. A number of the separate verses (*sākhī*) found in the *Kabir granthavali* are also written in the *viraha* mode (see Mataprasad Gupta's introduction in Kabir 1969: 42-43).

⁴³ Kabir (1968: 287; 2000: 348).

Without sight of you, how can I live,
O Murari?

In the *Kabir granthavali*, Kabir's preference for bhakti to a formless Supreme God is sometimes indicated in his use of the name Niranjan, meaning "without stain", for this God, a name without any clear link to either Vaishnava or Muslim religion.⁴⁴ It is likely that the use of the name Niranjan originated in the Nath Panth. In the *Gorakh bani* God is frequently called Niranjan. Nonetheless, it is only after Kabir that the name Niranjan get incorporated into the Dadu Panth, the Niranjani Panth, the Sikh Panth, and other *nirguni* groups as a common name for the Supreme God. Why Niranjan became a name for the god of death, Yama or Kal, in the literature of the Dharamdasi branch of the Kabir Panth (a usage that infiltrates a few songs of the *Kabir bijak*) is unclear. It is noteworthy that one song in the *Kabir granthavali* explicitly states that Niranjan is not a name for Kal, the god of Death.⁴⁵

By far the best known *Kabir granthavali* song about Niranjan is the only song from the three early collections to survive intact in modern collections of popular Kabir songs (*bhajan*). This song contrasts Niranjan with a reified Anjan (stain, mark). Anjan is said to include all the gods including Krishna (here called Govinda), the Vedas, and all the paraphernalia of traditional religion:⁴⁶

rāṃma niraṃjana nyārā re,
aṃjana sakala pasārā re || ṭeka ||
aṃjana utapati vo umkāra | aṃjana māṃḍyā saba bistāra ||
aṃjana brahmā saṃkara iṃda | aṃjana gopī saṃgi gobyāṃda ||
aṃjana bāṃṇī aṃjana beda | aṃjana kīyā nāṃnāṃ bheda ||
aṃjana bidyā pāṭha purāṃna | aṃjana phokaṭa kathahi giyāṃna ||
aṃjana pātī aṃjana deva | aṃjana kī karai aṃjana seva ||
aṃjana nāchai aṃjana gāvai | aṃjana bheṣa anaṃta dikhāvai ||
aṃjana kahaum kahām laga ketā | dāṃna puṃni tapa tīratha jetā ||
kahai kabīra koi biralā jāgai | aṃjana chhāḍi niraṃjana lāgai ||

Niranjan Ram remains apart.
Anjan is every other thing.

⁴⁴ Niranjan is also a common name for God in the songs (*ginans*) of the Ismaili poets discussed above.

⁴⁵ Kabir (1968: no. 219; 2000: no 246).

⁴⁶ Kabir (1968: no. 336; 2000: no. 43). The translation is taken from Lorenzen (1996: 218).

Anjan is the creation, the syllable OM.

Anjan is all the things we see.

Anjan is Indra, Brahma, and Shankar.

Anjan is Govinda and all the gopis.

Anjan is the songs, Anjan is the Vedas.

Anjan has made so many secrets.

Anjan is knowledge, texts and traditions.

Anjan gives lessons in worthless wisdom.

Anjan is the offerings, Anjan is the gods.

Anjan offers its services to Anjan.

Anjan dances, Anjan sings.

Anjan puts on endless disguises.

Tell me: How far and how many is Anjan?

As many as gifts, penances, spas and virtues.

Says Kabir: It's an uncommon person who awakes,

Abandons Anjan and sticks to Niranjan.

5. Final comments

There are several points to be made about this data on Kabir and the avatars. First, the inconsistencies in the ideas expressed in his compositions should not prevent us from offering generalizations about Kabir's point of view. Even if we assume that the compositions in the three early collections were nearly all the compositions of Kabir himself, the legends about his long life suggest that his songs and verses were composed over a period of forty or fifty years. Are we to assume that he never modified his opinions over all this time? In addition, it is likely that many of Kabir's compositions in the early collections were either composed in his name by other persons or modified by the singers and editors of the collections. For any generalization about his views, it is the predominant evidence that should count, not the exceptions.

Although Kabir's texts about the avatars primarily express a theological position, they also have important religious and social consequences. Two issues stand out: language and caste. In Kabir's time, and even today, the authoritative language of Hindu religion was Sanskrit and the authoritative languages of Islam were Arabic and Persian. As far as we can determine, only two important bhakti

poets who composed in early Hindi or Hindavi preceded Kabir. One was Namdev, possibly of the fourteenth century, who left songs in both early Marathi and early Hindi, and the other was Gorakh, whose early Hindi *Gorakh-bani* are of uncertain date but may well predate Kabir.⁴⁷ Kabir also had two notable early Hindi poets as his contemporaries. One was Raidas.⁴⁸ Both he and Kabir are said to have been disciples of the Brahmin Ramananda. More important was Surdas, a man of uncertain date but possibly a contemporary of Kabir.⁴⁹ A few others—notably the historically elusive woman poet Mirabai and, if his language can be considered early Hindi, Guru Nanak—overlapped with Kabir but most of their extant songs and verses were composed after Kabir’s death in about 1518. By the second half of the sixteenth century, the number of good bhakti poets who composed in early Hindi exploded. The most famous of them—and the only poet to rival the trio of Kabir, Surdas, and Mirabai—was Tulsidas, the author of the most famous Hindi retelling of the Sanskrit *Ramayana*.

Tulsidas’s *Ramcharitmanas* was written in the 1630s. In it, Tulsidas several times offers an indirect defense of having written his text in a “common speech” (*prākṛt, bhāṣā*) or “village speech” (*girā grāmya*):

A cow may be black, but its milk will be white, nutritious and drunk by all. My words may be in village speech but they praise the glory of Ram and Sita and are sung and heard by good men. [...]

I humbly bow to all those most wise vernacular poets of past, present and future who have described Hari’s adventures in common speech. May they be pleased and grant me the boon that my verses be honored among good men. [...]

If my dream for the grace of Hara and Gauri comes true, then the power of my verses in common speech will also become true (Tulsidas 1989: 15, 21, 22. My translation).

Tulsidas’s comments were motivated in part by that fact that writing out a retelling of a sacred Sanskrit text in a vernacular language was equivalent to breaking the monopoly on expounding and explaining this text held by Brahmins. Crudely put, Tulsidas was making it more difficult for his fellow Brahmins to control religion and earn a living.⁵⁰ Ramdas Lamb (1991: 237) summarizes a story from Tulsidas’s

⁴⁷ See Callewaert and Lath (1989), and Djurdjevic and Singh (2019).

⁴⁸ See Callewaert and Friedlander (1992).

⁴⁹ See Hawley (1984).

⁵⁰ A quite comparable situation developed in Europe, especially in the early sixteenth century, over translations of the Bible. The Catholic Church tried to maintain control over Christian doctrine and practice by limiting the Bible translations to the so-called Vulgate, an early translation from the original Hebrew and Greek into Latin. Early Protestants such as Luther and

disciple Benimadhavdas about the hostile reaction of the Brahmins of Varanasi against Tulsidas for having written his text in Hindi instead of Sanskrit:

According to the legend the Brahmin priests of Banaras were furious that the story of Ram had been written in a vernacular language instead of in Sanskrit, and they denounced the *Manas* as a debasement of the holy scriptures. Subsequently, Tulsidas took his work to the main Siva temple in the city where a test of its validity was devised by a respected Sanskrit scholar. That night the book was placed before the main image in the temple, and on top of it were placed [various sacred Sanskrit texts]. The temple was then locked for the night. When it was reopened in the morning the *Manas* was found on top of the pile.

Many of songs attributed to Surdas and Mirabai that survive in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century manuscripts are based not on the Sanskrit *Ramayana*, but, directly or indirectly, on another seminal Sanskrit text, the *Bhagavata-purana*. The reaction of contemporary Brahmins to their retellings of the legends of Krishna is not known, but any possibly hostile reaction may have been softened by the fact that Surdas and Mirabai wrote only short poems and did not attempt to create a vernacular version of the entire Purana. Nonetheless, Surdas and Mirabai were encroaching upon territory controlled by the Brahmins who expounded the Sanskrit texts. In the case of Mirabai, this encroachment was aggravated by the fact that she was a Rajput by caste and was, scandalously, a married woman who neglected and then abandoned her royal husband.

The case of Kabir was even more scandalous. He was a man from a very lowly caste, the Julahas, a caste of mostly Muslim weavers. Worse still, he not only composed in the Hindi language, he attacked many aspects of both traditional Hindu religion and traditional Islam and claimed that at a higher level both religions became one: Allah and Ram were ultimately the same. In this scheme of things, the avatars were generally either ignored, demoted, or clearly rejected. At the least, the preponderance of the evidence suggests that Kabir regarded the avatars Ram and Krishna as secondary figures who could not compete with his formless Supreme God nor with Ram's holy Name.

A well-known legend tells how the townspeople of Varanasi, including Kabir's own mother, brought him before Sultan Sikandar Lodi and demanded that he be punished. The sultan attempted to kill him by various ordeals, but every attempt miraculously failed. This may be merely a legend, but it undoubtedly reflects a genuine and well-deserved hostility toward Kabir and his radical religious and social message. By the time Tulsidas wrote his *Ramcharitmanas*, the followers of Kabir and of other low

William Tyndale were among the first to publish translations into modern languages: Luther into German in 1522 and 1534 and Tyndale into English in 1526 and 1530. See Daniell (1994).

caste *nirguni* disciples of Ramananda like Raidas and Sen had become numerous enough to merit Tulsidas's fierce opposition. Under the pretext of describing a past Kali age, Tulsidas (1989: 185-186) wrote:⁵¹

Without any knowledge of Brahman, men and women talk about nothing else. They are so greedy they will kill a Brahmin guru for a trifle.

Shudras argue with Brahmins saying: "Are we less than you? He who knows Brahman is the best of Brahmins." They openly display these rebukes. [...]

When their women die or lose their property, persons of the lowest castes (*baranādhama*)—oilmen, potters, dog-eaters, Kiratas, Kols, and liquor sellers—shave their heads and become sannyasis. [...]

Shudras do various sorts of penances and vows. Seated on a throne they recite the Puranas.

Kabir's disregard, if not disdain, for Vishnu's avatars was, of course, only a part of his radically unorthodox approach to religious belief and practice. Nonetheless, it was an integral part, a key to his wider religious and social vision. Without a sincere faith in the stories about Krishna, Rama and the other avatars, the whole edifice of traditional early-modern *saguni* Vaishnava and Hindu religion and its keystone, the *Bhagavata-purana*, was called into question. By our twenty-first century, however, the possibilities that Kabir opened up for a new reformed Hindu religion, seem to have largely failed.⁵² Kabir has been incorporated into a capacious and diverse but largely conservative Vaishnava and Hindu religion. Unlike the Sikhs, Kabir's followers have not attempted to break away from an identification with traditional Vaishnava and Hindu religion. Kabir's message is certainly still relevant, but it has not been able persuade his followers to overcome the inertia of traditional ideas and practices. For me, this is a tragedy and not a cause to celebrate the openness and inclusivity of Indian culture.

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⁵¹ This passage also echoes a verse of the *Bhagavata-purana* (12.3.38) that describes the Kali age as one in which: "The Shudras will live by putting on the dress of ascetics and accepting [alms]. Those who do not know dharma will preach dharma and mount high thrones."

⁵² I have made this argument in more detail in Lorenzen (2014).

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On some references of the *Buddhapādamaṅgala* to the *Suttapiṭaka* and the *Abhidhammapiṭaka*

Giuliano Giustarini

This article compares the *Buddhapādamaṅgala*, a Pāli work written in the Ayutthaya kingdom probably in the sixteenth century, with the canonical sources (mainly from the *Suttapiṭaka* and the *Abhidhammapiṭaka*) that inspired the symbology adopted by the text. The analysis indicates that this symbology, which permeates Buddhist tradition in Thailand, was developed through several stages under the influence of Pāli commentarial literature and of paracanonical texts such as the *Milindapañha*.

Keywords: Theravāda Buddhism; Pāli-Thai literature; Buddhist iconography

1. Introduction¹

In 2011 there was a particularly significant publication in Thailand: Cicuzza (2011), i.e., the critical edition with the English translation of the *Buddhapādamaṅgala*, a Pāli work written by an unknown author in Thailand (ca. XVI cent.), which examines in detail the meanings of the symbols appearing on the footprints of the Buddha.

There are sound reasons to see this work as a milestone to understand the spread and development of Buddhism in Thailand in all its cultural manifestations. For instance, it sheds light upon the *Buddhapāda* symbols on the soles of the feet of the huge reclining Buddha at Wat Pho, in Bangkok, or on the footprints at Sukhothai, so that one may better admire them while appreciating the complex and fascinating symbology they display.²

¹ I express my gratitude to Claudio Cicuzza for providing me with the photographs and for discussing with me some relevant concepts from the *Buddhapādamaṅgala*, the *Kervan* staff for the accurate editorial work and two anonymous referees for their corrections and advice. Of course, I remain the sole responsible for any mistake.

² Visitors at Wat Pho usually admire the impressive size of the statue, are inspired by its reference to the *parinibbāna*, with all the metaphysical aura it entails, and enjoy the surrounding sense of devotion of the Buddhist followers who circumambulate the statue, the sound of the coins dropped, etc. The symbols beautifully carved on the sole of the feet inspire awe, but their

At the present stage, the understanding of the iconography of the Buddhapādamaṅgala still lacks a comparative study of the images therein described with the canonical sources behind them.³ Therefore, in the present study I would like to examine some of those symbols in the light of the Pāli Tipiṭaka, with a special reference to the Suttaṭīṭaka and Abhidhammaṭīṭaka. The analysis of selected passages will demonstrate how the text draws concepts and lexical features from the Pāli Canon sometimes by quoting passages verbatim and sometimes by elaborating canonical contents in a new fashion.

2. The footprint and its symbols

The list of the symbols occurs in different versions in the early commentarial tradition (D-a CST4 II.33, PTS II.445-446; M-a CST4 II.386, PTS III.375)⁴ and in some later Pāli texts, inscriptions, or recent booklets: the Jinālaṅkāraṭīkā, the Namakkāraṭīkā (Nam-ṭ CST4 97), the Pajjamadhu (Gooneratne 1987), the Paṭhamasambodhi (PTS 32-33), the Samantakūṭavaṇṇanā (vv. 765-770), the Prah Mahāpurusalakkhaṇa, the Buddhapādalakkhaṇa, and stone inscriptions in Thailand, at Sukhothai (Cicuzza 2011: liv-lxiii). Specific symbols are found outside the list in some texts, like the king of swans (*haṃsarājā*, in the Cūḷahaṃsajātaka, Jā CST4 II.44, 45). Other images are typical symbols recurring throughout Buddhist literature in various traditions (the sun, *suriya*, the moon, *candimā*, the elephant, *hatthi*, the horse, *assa*, the lotus, *paduma*, etc.). Even if we narrow down the scope to the Pāli Tipiṭaka, the images thoroughly described in the BPM are meant to inspire those positive qualities that Buddhist teachings consider as crucial in the path to awakening and in the ordinary life of devotees as well. In fact, it is largely due to their complex symbology that the *buddhapādas* need to be examined in the light of canonical and paracanonical scriptures: “... besides offering themselves as pure objects for meditation they also invite significant engagement with the Buddha’s teachings” (Cicuzza 2011: xxxiii).

meanings and their references to the canonical teachings of the Buddha might be lost without a thorough explanation. And without grasping them, one misses a remarkable area of Thai culture, including the embodiment of Pāli Buddhist sources that underpins its religious milieu. It is as if one visits the Christian Catacombs in Rome without knowing that the image of the fish represents a reference to Jesus through the acronym ἰχθύς (*ichthys*), or admires the School of Athens by Raffaello unaware of the twofold identities of the characters portrayed in the fresco.

³ For studies on Buddhist symbols in general and their textual sources, see Bhattacharyya (1959), Karlsson (1999), and Anālayo (2017).

⁴ Pāli canonical references are to Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka, 4th edition, Igatpuri, Vipassana Research Institute; pages in the PTS editions are indicated too.

The footprint of the Buddha is represented in the Suttas as one of the marks (*lakkhana*) of a *tathāgata* or of a *mahāpurisa* and endowed with the thousand-spoke wheel (*cakka*).⁵ Moreover, its auspicious symbols (*maṅgala*) are variously mentioned and/or described in commentarial literature (Cicuzza xv-xvii). The cases below are exemplary in that regard.

3. The sword that severs defilments



Figure 1. satti ‘the sword’ (from Bunteuen Srivarapoj. 2547 [2004]. Ratanamongkhon kham chan. Bangkok: 15; in Thai).

⁵ See the Lakkhaṇasutta (D 30, CST4 III.204-205, PTS III.148-149) and the Doṇasutta (A CST4 IV.36, PTS II.38-39); cp. Bodhi (2012: 1696, n. 695). For a list of Gāndhārī and Chinese parallels of the Doṇasutta, see Anālayo (2017: 15-17). For more Pāli (and Sanskrit) references, see Cicuzza (2011: xxix-xxxiii).

The BPM contains two references to the image of the blade/sword: one is in the term *satti* and the other one in the term *khagga*. Both terms here explicitly refer to the weapon to defeat the adversaries (*paccaṭṭhika*) or Māra, identified as “all defilements which attach to all beings living in the three worlds” (BPM 3/113). Along these lines, Dhammapāla (D-ptṭ CST4 II.35, PTS II.47; M-ptṭ CST4 II.86) glosses the term *satti* occurring in the same list as *āvudhasatti*, the blade as a weapon (PED: *ā + yudh*). In the case of *satti* (which is the first symbol in the entire list) the BPM also outlines its association with the faculty of deep understanding, or wisdom (*paññā*), distinguishing two kinds of knowledge, the knowledge of the path of Arahantship and the knowledge associated with the fruition of Arahantship.”⁶ In the Suttapitaka, this association is found, phrased in the compound *paññā-sattha* (the sword of wisdom) in the Cīttavagga of the Dhammapada and in the Talaputa Thera of the Theragāthā, as well as in some paracanonical texts included in the Khuddaka Nikāya (e.g. Paṭiṣ CST4 I.109, PTS I.119). With regard to the Abhidhamma sources, it occurs in numerous passages of the Dhammasaṅgani (e.g., Dhs CST4 I.16, PTS I.11) and in two other texts of the Abhidhammapitaka (Vibh CST4 525, PTS 250; Pp CST4 80, PTS 25). The reference to Māra, along with the reference to wisdom and the commentarial exegesis of *satti* as *āvudha*, resonate with the following encouragement in the Dhammapada: “one should fight Māra with the weapon of wisdom.”⁷

It should be pointed out that, in contrast with the meaning of *paññā-sattha* in Abhidhamma passages, in the BPM *paññā* is one of the requisites of the blade and not the blade itself, which is instead equated to the basis subject for meditation (*mūlakammaṭṭhāna*), as in the simile of the hunter and the buffalo (BPM 4-5/114).⁸

The term *satthā* may indicate a sword, a knife, or a scalpel (PED), therefore the blade that severs defilements (*kilesa*), which are by and large fetters (*saṃyojana* or *yoga*). In fact, a common exegesis reads: “In ‘the sword of wisdom,’ wisdom is compared to a sword in the sense that it severs defilements.”⁹ What emerges in the Abhidhamma usage of *sattha*, compared with the role of its synonym *satti* in the path to *nibbāna* as described in the BPM, is a stronger emphasis on the application of a specific tool rather than the sense of a battle that the BPM evokes.

⁶ *Arahattamaggañāṇa-arahattaphalañāṇasaṅkhatam* (BPM 2/112).

⁷ *Yodhetha māraṃ paññāvudhena* (Dhp 40; transl. Norman 1997: 6).

⁸ The numbers before / indicate the location of the Pāli text in Ciczuzza’s work, the numbers following / refer to the translation of the same textual passages.

⁹ *Kilesacchedanaṭṭhena paññāva sattham paññāsattham* (Dhs-a CST4 I.16, PTS 147, Paṭiṣ-a CST4 I.108-109, PTS II.388).

Clearly, there is not much difference between the function of a surgical device and that of a weapon, as the two approaches are two facets of the same coin. A distinction is in the nuance: the exhortation to a battle probably aims at stimulating a particular set of qualities like faith, effort, and courage in the disciple, whereas the emphasis on cutting off fetters could inspire a desire for freedom.

Whereas the Dhammasaṅgaṇī just mentions the compound, the BPM's description closely resembles the passage in the Milindapañha, and this comes with no surprise, considering the importance of the Milindapañha in Thailand.¹⁰

The term *khagga*, on the other hand, is notoriously found in canonical sources as referred to the sword-horn of the rhinoceros in the Khaggavisāṇasutta (Sn CST4 I.35-75, PTS 6-11). In the Araññāyatanaśisutta the term indicates the sword of the lord of the devas, Sakka: the text says that Sakka gives the sword to his entourage before going to pay homage to wise holy men (*isi*), endowed with moral discipline and living in the forest (S CST4 I.255, PTS I.226). In the Therīgāthā, Sumedhā cuts her own hair with a sword (*khagga*; Therī 482) as a gesture of renunciation, but the commentary does not ascribe any further symbolic meaning to that.

The image of the sword often appears in Suttas that use the analogy of the battlefield to illustrate the path, like the Dutiyayodhājīvasutta of the Aṅguttara Nikāya (A CST4 V.76, PTS III.93-95). In that circumstance, the sword (*asi*), along with the shield, the quiver, and the arrows, are the weapons of the warrior, and the whole sutta describes the personal fight between conducting the life of a bhikkhu and returning to the 'inferior' (*hīna*) life.

¹⁰ Current research on the manuscripts of the Milindapañha circulated in ancient Siam has demonstrated that various recensions were transmitted and preserved by specific Buddhist communities in different times (Eng Jin Ooi 2021: 174).

4. The seven rivers that flow to awakening



Figure 2. *sattamahāgaṅgā* ‘the seven great rivers’ (from Bunteuen Srivarapoj. 2547 [2004]. Ratanamongkhon kham chan. Bangkok: 63; in Thai).

Another interesting simile is the one that compares the seven factors of awakening to the seven great rivers (*sattamahāgaṅgā*), taught by the Buddha “in the hearts of all beings according to their inclinations” (Cicuzza 2011: 159). As pointed out by Cicuzza, the association between the seven rivers and the seven factors of awakening occurs in the *Avijjāsutta* of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*.¹¹ Here the rivers

¹¹ A CST4 X.61, PTS V.113-116; Cicuzza (2011: 158).

are called *mahānādi* and are the last ones in the list of streams that flow into and fill the great ocean (*mahāsamudda*) according to a twofold connotation: in the negative path they are the five hindrances that nourish ignorance (*avijjā*), whereas in the positive one they correspond to the seven *bojjhaṅgas* that flow into knowledge and liberation (*vijjā-vimutti*).

The reference to the inclinations of beings might echo a canonical classification of the *bojjhaṅgas* in accordance with their stimulating or relaxing qualities¹² and the Abhidhamma taxonomy of beings recurring in the *Puggalapaññatti* and in the *Vibhaṅga*.

Throughout the *Maggasam̐yutta* the great rivers (usually five) are also associated with the noble eightfold path, and in the *Parisāsutta* of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* their flowing into the ocean is likened to the meditative and pre-meditative stages that in harmonious communities (*samagga-parisā*) of *bhikkhus* flow into concentration (*samādhi*), or the ocean.¹³

In the well-known *Pahārādasutta*, still in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the [five] great rivers refer to the *bhikkhus* from the four distinct social classes and specific family names, all losing their names and social statuses in the Dhamma-Vinaya/ocean. Also, all those *bhikkhus* who reach *nibbāna* do not increase or diminish it, like the rivers don't visibly affect the great ocean.¹⁴ Elsewhere, the same rivers symbolize all the wholesome (*kusala*) dhammas, which converge into the ocean of diligent attention (*appamāda*), clearly defining the latter as encompassing the other qualities rather than their goal (A CST4 X.15, PTS V.22).

¹² *Aggisutta*, A V.219, PTS III.256.

¹³ The process includes altruistic joy (*muditā*), bliss (*pīti*), relaxation of the body (*kāya-passaddhi*), ease (*sukha*), and the latter leads to concentration of the mind (A CST4 III.96, PTS I.243-244).

¹⁴ A CST4 VIII.19, PTS IV.202. The list of the *Pahārādasutta* occurs also in the *Uposathasutta* of the *Udāna* (Ud CST4 45, PTS 51-56). At the end of the *Praśna Upaniṣad*, there is the image of the rivers flowing into the ocean, thus losing their individualities (Pr Up 6.5; cp. Olivelle 1998: 471).

5. The goad of knowledge



Figure 3. aṅkusa ‘the goad’ (from Bunteuen Srivarapoj. 2547 [2004]. Ratanamongkhon kham chan. Bangkok: 23; in Thai).

The BPM also employs the notion of goad (*aṅkusa*), consisting in the “knowledge of the path of arahantship” and in the “knowledge of the fruition of arahantship” (respectively on the soles of the right and left foot of the Buddha). The text offers an alternative interpretation of the symbol, viz., the recollection of the virtues (*guṇa*) if the three Gems (24/133). Another term that can be correctly translated as “goad” and occurs in the Sutta-pitaka is *patoda*, found for instance in the *Kakacūpamasutta* (M 21, CST4 I.225, PTS I.123) and in the *Patodasutta* (A CST4 IV. 113, PTS II.114-116). The *Patodasutta* presents the simile of a horse that follows orders just by seeing the shade (*chaya*) of a

goad, symbolising the wholesome sense of perturbation, urgency (*saṃvega*) that drives a person to the path of liberation. The use of the simile in the Kakacūpamasutta presents a similar meaning, though the goad is therein meant as the instigation to mindfulness (*sati*) and applies to the monastic rule of eating one meal per day. Within paracanonical literature, more specifically in the hermeneutical Nettippakarana, *patoda* is associated to profound understanding or wisdom (*paññā*) with a phrasing resembling the one found in the Dhammasaṅgaṇī.¹⁵

6. The palace of wisdom at the center of awakening



Image 4. *pāsāda* ‘the palace’ (from Bunteuen Srivarapoj. 2547 [2004]. Ratanamongkhon kham chan. Bangkok: 22; in Thai).

¹⁵ Netti CST4 48, PTS 75; Dhs e.g., CST4 16, 20, PTS 11.

Another commonality between the BPM, the Dhammasaṅgani, and the Milindapañha is represented by the image of the palace (*pāsāda*) to indicate *paññā*. In the following depiction of the city of the Dhamma by the Pāli Milindapañha it refers to the centre of the whole set of teachings of the Buddha:

*bhagavato kho mahārāja dhammanagaraṃ silapākāraṃ hiriparikhaṃ ñāṇadvāraḥṭṭhakaṃ
vīriyaatṭālakam saddhāesikaṃ satidovārikaṃ paññāpāsādam suttantacaccaram
abhidhammasiṅghāṭakam vinayavinicchayaṃ satipaṭṭhānavīthikaṃ*

In the Lord's City of Dhamma the encircling walls are moral habit, the moats are conscience, the ramparts over the city-gates are knowledge, the watch-towers are energy, the pillars are faith, the door-keepers are mindfulness, the palace is wisdom, the cross-roads are the Suttantas, the places where three or four roads meet are the Abhidhamma, the law-court is the Vinaya, the streetway is the applications of mindfulness.

(Mil CST4 V.4.1, PTS 332; transl. Horner 1969: 173)

This complex iconography is creatively mirrored in the BPM:

*pāsādo ti ayaṃ mahānibbānanagarasaṃkhāto ratanapāsādo nāma hoti | taṃ ratanapāsādam
buddhasiri-maṅgalavaḍḍhanaṃ buddhapādadvayatale jātaṃ hoti | yasmā hi bhagavā tasmim
mahānibbānanagarasaṃkhāte ratanapāsādadvāre nisinno anto appavesitum
sabbakilesapaccatthikānaṃ paṭibāhati | tassa ratanapāsādassa ativiya parisuddhatāya kiñci
kilesa-malapaccatthikamalasamaṣaṭṭhassa natthitāya | tasmā idaṃ ratanapāsādam buddharatanan
ti vuccati |
atha vā idaṃ mahānibbānanagaraṃ ratanapāsādan ti vuccati | idaṃ pana heṭṭhā vuttanayeneva
veditabbam |*

The palace is the precious palace reckoned as the great city of Nibbāna. This precious palace exists on the two soles of the feet of the Buddha increasing [the number of] his resplendent auspicious signs. Since the Blessed One sits at the entrance to the precious palace, reckoned as the great city of Nibbāna, in order to prevent any intrusion, he is able to keep out adversaries such as all defilements. [24] Nothing is superior in purity to this precious palace, given the complete absence [in it] of any relationship with the adversaries such as impurities and defilements. Therefore this precious palace is explained as the Buddha-jewel. Or alternatively, the great city of the Nibbāna is called the “precious palace”. This ought to be known from what has been said [just] above.

(BPM 23-24/133)

It is noteworthy that, while the image of the palace of wisdom is present in the Dhammasaṅgaṇī, the city of Nibbāna (*nibbāna-nagara*) in the BPM has the Milindapañha as its only antecedent. This reinforces the hypothesis that the influence of the Milindapañha was crucial in the composition of the BPM, which is one of the various reasons to devote studies on the Thai redactions of the text.¹⁶

In the Ariyapariyesanāsutta, there are these two recurring *pādas* within Brahmā Sahampati's request to teach:

tathūpamaṃ dhammamayaṃ sumedha

pāsādam āruyha samantacakkhu

So, o Wise One, All-seeing,

Ascend the palace of the Dhamma.

(M 26, CST4 I.282, PTS I.168; transl. Ñāṇamoli-Bodhi 2001: 261)

The BPM uses the image of the palace for one of the descriptions of the golden body of the Buddha:

Or alternatively, the physical body of the Blessed One is of a golden colour, like a golden palace (*suvaṇṇapāsāda*) bounded by a railing (*vedikā*) and adorned with jewels, and shining forth, glistening very brightly, when it comes into contact with the splendour reflected by the jewels of the railing. Therefore the Blessed One is called a “golden palace” surrounded by a railing adorned with jewels. (Cicuzza 2011: 126)

7. Conclusion

This study on specific terms employed in the Buddhapādamaṅgala in the light of their possible Pāli canonical sources indicates that:

- The text represents a late exegesis wherein layers of influence from commentarial works are evident. To which extent the exegetical function was intentional or just inherited from its usage of the sources is not perfectly clear, as it may reflect both commentaries and contemporary vernacular works.
- The Buddhapādamaṅgala is a precious witness of Thai Buddhism in the time of the composition of the text and of the familiarity of the author/s with the Tipiṭaka and its commentaries.

¹⁶ Relevant research in that respect has been conducted by Ooi Eng Jin (Transmission of the Milindapañha, unpublished PhD thesis).

- The references to specific passages suggest that the text was meant to popularize the teachings of the Buddha therein expressed as well as to inspire devotional and meditative practices. In this light, we may talk of a performative symbology.
- Canonical references seem to be filtered through the lexicon and philosophical reflections of the Milindapañha, whose impact on Thai Buddhism requires further investigation.
- Comparative studies with unedited Pāli/Thai manuscripts may hopefully outline a relationship between the complex symbolism of the Buddhapādamāṅgala and Thai meditative tradition as well as its interrelation with other Pāli and vernacular works.

Abbreviations

A	Aṅguttara Nikāya
BPM	Buddhapādamāṅgala
CST4	Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka, 4th edition
D	Dīgha Nikāya
D-a	Sumaṅgalavilasini (Dīgha Nikāya-aṭṭhakathā)
D-pt	Līnatthapakāsini I (Dīgha Nikāya-purāṇa-ṭikā)
Dhs	Dhammasaṅgaṇī
Dhs-a	Atthasālinī (Dhammasaṅgaṇī-aṭṭhakathā)
Jā	Jātaka
M	Majjhima Nikāya
M-a	Papañcasūdanī (Majjhima Nikāya-aṭṭhakathā)
M-pt	Līnatthapakāsini II (Majjhima Nikāya-purāṇa-ṭikā)
Mil	Milindapañha
Nam-ṭ	Namakkāraṭikā
Netti	Nettipakaraṇa
Paṭis	Paṭisambhidāmagga
Paṭis-a	Saddhammapakāsini (Paṭisambhidāmagga-aṭṭhakathā)
PED	Pali-English Dictionary (Rhys Davids - Stede)
Pp	Puggalapaññatti
Pr Up	Praśna Upaniṣad
PTS	Pali Text Society edition
Sn	Suttanipāta
Therī	Therīgāthā

Ud	Udāna
Vibh	Vibhaṅga

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Mis/communication and identity in Chang Kuei-hsing's novella

Wandao. Lanhua. Zuolunqiang (1983)

Antonio Paoliello

This paper analyses *Wandao. Lanhua. Zuolunqiang* (彎刀·蘭花·左輪槍 Machete, Orchid, Revolver) (1983), an early novella by Taiwan-based Sinophone Malaysian (Sarawak) writer Chang Kuei-hsing (張貴興 Zhang Guixing). A widely read and one of the most respected Sinophone authors, since the 1990s Chang has been known for writing both short and long fiction centred on the trope of the Bornean rainforest, often processing it by means of personal and literary memories. However, through a close reading of the novella, I demonstrate that such a trope was already present in his early writings, albeit in an unprocessed way, being the rainforest a crude environment as well as a shared site of inter-ethnic mis/communication between ethnic Chinese and Malays. Additionally, the novella is Chang Kuei-hsing's only work of fiction that directly addresses the issue of national identity, thus urging us to examine the 'Sinophone Malaysian writer' label he has unproblematically been given, especially considering that the term 'Malaysian' most often refers to West Malaysia and marginalises the Bornean states of Sarawak and Sabah. The paper, therefore, seeks to promote a deeper understanding of the multiple factors that should be taken into account when investigating and categorising Sinophone literature by authors who are (or once were) Malaysians.

Keywords: Chang Kuei-hsing, Identity, Miscommunication, Sinophone Malaysian Literature, Sinophone Sarawakian Fiction

1. Introduction

The new millennium has seen an increase in English-language research focusing on Sinophone issues, especially thanks to the tireless effort of scholars such as Shu-mei Shih, David Wang Der-wei and Jing Tsu who have equipped this emerging field of studies with a sound theoretical framework.¹ However,

¹ Shu-mei Shih defines the Sinophone as a concept encompassing "Sinitic-language communities and their expressions (cultural, political, social, etc.) on the margins of nations and nationalness in the internal colonies and other minority

it is important to point out that, as obvious as it may sound, well before the concept of the Sinophone was created, cultural products that could be labelled as such had been produced for centuries worldwide, in regions as diverse as Taiwan, Southeast Asia, North America and so on. Among all art forms, literature has been especially dynamic in its contribution to Sinophone cultures, and among all geographic regions, postcolonial Malaysia and its preceding political entities of British Malaya, Sarawak and British North Borneo have provided the Sinophone literary polysystem² with numerous writers whose talent has been recognised throughout the Sinitic-speaking world and beyond. Sinophone Malaysian literature is extremely diverse in terms of the genres explored (fiction, but also poetry, essay and theatre), of the geographic provenance of the writers (Peninsular Malaysia, but also Sarawak and Sabah), of the location from where they write (Malaysia, but also Singapore, Taiwan and, to a lesser extent and as a more recent phenomenon, mainland China), of the Sinitic languages they use (standard Mandarin, but also its localised version/s, heavily influenced by other Sinitic languages as well as Malay and English) and of the themes they portray (the rainforest and the rubber plantations, the history and fate of the local Chinese community, the often-tense relations with other Malaysian ethnic groups, but also the destiny of the eternal wanderer in search of their place in society, and so on).

However, and despite the heterogeneity of issues, it is rather common for Sinophone Malaysian authors to explore the interaction between the Chinese community and other local ethnic groups: a logical choice, considering that in a country such as Malaysia, “ethnicity remains the most potent force” (Lee 2000: 1). If one focuses on works of fiction, it is only too obvious that in the multi-ethnic environment of Malaysia they are often permeated by a special literary preoccupation with identity, with the question of who we are vis-à-vis the rest of Malaysian society and in relation to the larger Sinitic cultural world. This preoccupation mirrors a similar interest within the Chinese Malaysian community at large, whose sense of identity has been constructed through a constant process of inter-ethnic interaction and is built upon the appearance of the Other, with whom the ethnic Chinese Self is constantly confronted. Especially after the 1969 Racial Riots that broke out in the Kuala Lumpur area

communities in China as well as outside it, with the exception of settler colonies where the Sinophone is the dominant vis-à-vis their indigenous populations” (2011: 716). Jing Tsu and David Der-wei Wang acknowledge that in its analysis, the Sinophone can either include or exclude mainland China; in both cases, the main idea is to “dismantle the hegemonic focus of a ‘national’ Chinese literature and perhaps of a ‘national literature’ at all” (2010: 6).

²Rather than a single literary system, I consider Sinophone literature(s) as a diverse and dynamic set of literary systems “which intersect with each other and partly overlap, using concurrently different options, yet functioning as one structured whole, whose members are interdependent.” (Even-Zohar 1990: 11)

and led to the Malaynisation of the country, Chinese – Malay/Indigenous relations have often been portrayed as being confrontational, resentful and characterised by lack of communication and understanding.

One salient example is Chang Kuei-hsing (張貴興 Zhang Guixing)'s³ semi-autobiographical novella *Wandao. Lanhua. Zuolunqiang* (彎刀·蘭花·左輪槍 “Machete, Orchid, Revolver;” 1983) which, through the terrible fate of its Chinese Malaysian protagonist who is unable to communicate with local Malays, articulates the writer's worries about an increasingly Malaynised homeland, where the rights of other ethnic communities are gradually being eroded. Chang's novella is especially important not only because it was written by one of the leading contemporary Sinophone Malaysian authors, but also because, published in Taiwan, it trespassed the borders of Sinophone Malaysia and acquainted a wider, transnational Sinitic-language readership to the challenges of being Chinese in a country consistently promoting *Ketuanan Melayu* (“Malay Primacy”), a political ideology that has become “a narrative of special birthright and ethnic primacy – if not supremacy – that in the view of non-Malays strikes at the very heart of attempts to envision a civic and pluralist conception of nationhood” (Liow 2015). Moreover, I consider this semi-autobiographical novella a crucial text to understand how *Ketuanan Melayu* and the subsequent Malaynisation of the country affected the lives and the choices of many young Chinese Malaysian intellectuals such as Chang Kuei-hsing who decided to relocate to Taiwan, a place where they could eventually thrive, albeit not without difficulties, both personally and professionally. Through a close reading of the novella, this paper aims at showing that while tackling highly entangled issues of personal, ethnic and national identity as well as inter-ethnic mis/communication, Chang also challenges the idea of a postcolonial country where “Malay Muslims as the majority have lived with plurality, shared powers, wealth and resources with other communities of various religious and ethnic backgrounds in relative peace and harmony” (Ahmad 2007: 140).

Lastly, by choosing a Sinophone Malaysian novella from 1983 as the object of my analysis, I also aim at attesting to the dynamism of Sinophone Malaysian fiction in a period generally thought to be dominated by authors and voices from the Chinese mainland and Taiwan, therefore showing that Sinophone literature was thriving long before the emergence of the Sinophone as an academic field.⁴

³ This and other personal Chinese names are transcribed using their official/preferred Romanisation rather than pinyin, which is used to render non-personal names, instead.

⁴ As Gálik suggests, in the Chinese literary context, “we hardly find a more successful (from the axiological point of view) period than that immediately preceding and following the year 1985” (2000: 154). The 1980s were, in fact, vibrant with writers gravitating around the scar literature movement (傷痕文學 shanghen wenxue), which recounted the wounds left by the Cultural Revolution, and around the root-seeking literary movement (尋根文學 xungen wenxue), which called for a

2. Chang Kuei-hsing: a Sinophone Malaysian (?) writer

An ethnic Chinese of Hakka heritage,⁵ Chang Kuei-hsing was born in 1956 in Lutong (Sarawak), a coastal town nestled between the Bornean rainforest and the South China Sea and adjacent to the Bruneian border. In a recent interview (2019), the writer recalls the tense atmosphere that, in the 1960s and 1970s, loomed upon his hometown due to the Communist insurgency.⁶ Chang attended the local Sinitic-medium primary school and after graduating from secondary school at the age of nineteen he left his native Sarawak to pursue higher education in Taiwan, where he enrolled at Taiwan Normal University. It was – and still is – not uncommon for Chinese Malaysians to attend university there, not only because they had grown disillusioned with the possibilities of improving their social and economic condition in a Malay-dominated country, but also because they were moved “by a rather romantic interest in the Chinese motherland and in what it might feel like to live life as a member of the ethnic majority” (Jaffee 2007: viii–ix).⁷ Immediately after graduation, Chang decided to relinquish his Malaysian citizenship and to become a national of the Republic of China (RoC hereafter), i.e. Taiwan, the country in which he decided to put down roots and from which he still writes today. Although a major event in a person’s life, the reasons for this nationality change are hinted at only in *Wandao. Lanhua. Zuolunqiang*, which becomes a unique and invaluable key text to understand the process of identity formation of both Chang Kuei-hsing, the person and Chang Kuei-hsing, the writer. Notwithstanding the fact that Borneo has been a source of artistic inspiration for Chang since his debut in 1980 with the short story collection

rediscovery of the Chinese tradition and cultural identity. Around the same period, the Taiwanese literary scene was dominated by the Nativist literary movement (鄉土文學 *xiangtu wenxue*), a reaction to Modernism as well as to the rapid urban and uncontrolled industrial development.

⁵ The majority of Chinese Sarawakians belong to the Hakka community. According to T’ien, “[t]he first big wave of settlers were miners coming from Pontianak, West Borneo, in about 1850” (1983: 279).

⁶ Occurring between 1962 and 1990 and not as well-known as the one in Peninsular Malaysia (1968–1989), the Communist insurgency in Sarawak began as an armed conflict between the colonial government and the Sarawak Communist Organisation (SCO), which not only fought for independence and to establish a communist society, but also opposed the inclusion of Sarawak into the Federation of Malaysia. It is important to note that the SCO’s membership was predominantly Chinese. As James Chin observes, “Communism in Sarawak had its origins in the Chinese schools in the 1950s, the Chinese media and trade unions. The communist infiltrated the Chinese schools, and used the newspapers to further reinforce their ideology. The three major Chinese-language papers in the late 1950s were all controlled by the communists” (2006).

⁷ Among the many Chinese Malaysians who settled in Taiwan, there are other important Sinophone figures such as novelist Lee Yung-ping (李永平 Li Yongping) (1947–2017) and film director Tsai Ming-liang (蔡明亮 Cai Mingliang) (1957–), both also from Sarawak, writer and literary scholar Ng Kim Chew (黃錦樹 Huang Jingshu) (1967–) from Johor, singer-songwriter Penny Tai (戴佩妮 Dai Peini) (1978–) also from Johor, and Mandopop star Fish Leong (梁靜茹 Liang Jingru) (1978–) from Negeri Sembilan, just to name a few.

Fu hu (伏虎 “Tiger in ambush”), it is only starting in the 1990s that memories of his native land are treated more extensively in his fiction (Lin 2010). While the stories collected in *Fu hu* uncover an author who navigates through Taipei’s urban scene, the Southeast Asian rainforests and Taiwan’s campus life in search of a common thematic thread, it is only with *Sailian zhi ge* (賽蓮之歌 “Siren Song,” 1992), the story of an ethnic Chinese young man growing up in colonial Sarawak, that his native land gains centre stage. The tropical lands of Borneo thus become the setting of all his subsequent works of fiction as well, including the most recent *Ye zhu du he* (野豬渡河 “Wild Boars Cross the River,” 2018), a novel depicting the dark days of the Japanese imperial invasion of Sarawak.

Being a transnational Sinophone writer and a transnational ethnic Chinese person (or 華人 *huaren*, in Chinese) has certainly shaped Chang Kuei-hsing’s relationship to both his homeland (Sarawak) and his host land (Taiwan), with the first having been moulded through personal memories, which were then presented to readers as literary memories. Moreover, Chang’s transnationalism has also been an important factor in shaping a fluid personal and literary identity. In fact, prior to becoming a RoC national, Chang Kuei-hsing was born a British subject when Sarawak was still a Crown Colony. In 1963, when his native land joined the Federation of Malaysia, he became a Malaysian citizen. Far from being a merely anecdotal issue, therefore, the transformation of Chang Kuei-hsing’s national identity deserves a deeper scrutiny than it has received so far, and it should be problematised vis-à-vis his identity as a Sinophone author. Although he is universally presented as a Sinophone Malaysian writer,⁸ Chang’s identity as Malaysian requires further consideration, especially in view of the relationship between his native Sarawak and the rest of Malaysia and on account of the importance that Borneo/Sarawak plays in his fiction and in the novella analysed in this paper.

While being a federated state of Malaysia since the early sixties, Sarawak, which together with the state of Sabah and the Federal Territory of Labuan conforms East Malaysia, shows great differences with West (or Peninsular) Malaysia in terms of geographic landscape, ethnic and religious composition, population density, and so on.⁹ Although Sinophone Sarawakian literature is generally considered a branch of the wider Sinophone Malaysian literary polysystem, it occupies a peripheral position, with its peculiarities in constant danger of being overlooked by readers and scholars alike.¹⁰ Even in

⁸ Among the extremely insightful English-language studies that, however, unproblematically treat him as Sinophone Malaysian, cf. Huang Yu-ting, who “interprets the unique aesthetics of Sinophone Malaysian author” (2018: 238) and Andrea Bachner, who similarly classifies him as a “Malaysian-Chinese writer” (2010: 177).

⁹ For instance, Sarawak is the only Malaysian federated entity without a Muslim-majority population (Lee 2018: 2).

¹⁰ One notable example is *Huidao Malaya – Huama xiaoshuo qishi nian* (Return to Malaya: Stories by Chinese Malaysian Writers, 1937–2007), a Chinese-language collection of short fiction by Chinese Malaysians who write in Sinitic languages,

academic contexts, the interest shown for Sinophone Sarawakian authors is considerably weaker than that for their East Malaysian counterpart, an attitude that contributes to wiping Sarawak out of the Peninsula-centric Sinophone Malaysian literary map (Chan 2006: 57). Therefore, the Malaysian identity of writers such as Chang Kuei-hsing should be discussed more critically, so as to recognise East Malaysians' contribution to the development of Sinophone Malaysian literature.¹¹ Taiwan-based Malaysian literary critic and editor Hu Jinlun suggests that there are several reasons for Chang Kuei-hsing and other Sinophone Sarawakian writers not to see themselves as Malaysians: from the peripherality of their homeland to the fact that Malaysia as such was established years, even decades after they were born, to the fact that their literary preoccupations generally do not include Malaysia as a geopolitical entity (Zhou 2012). Moreover, having developed his literary career in Taiwan, there is hardly anything (West) Malaysian in Chang Kuei-hsing the man, whose personal memories are deeply rooted in the Bornean rainforest, rather than in Malaysia's rubber plantations, and in Chang Kuei-hsing the fiction writer whose literary output is entrenched in Taiwan's publishing sector. If, as previously observed, Sinophone Malaysian literature is West-Malaysia-centric, then one cannot help but acknowledge that Chang Kuei-hsing writes from a doubly peripheral position: that of a Sarawakian in Taiwan.¹² If, however, Sinophone Malaysian literature is seen as a literary polysystem in which its three constitutive elements (namely, Sinophone Literature by West Malaysian authors, by East Malaysian authors and by Taiwan-based Malaysian authors) are independently developed section of a whole, as suggested by Chan Tah Wei (2006: 82), Chang Kuei-hsing can then be rightfully considered one of the most outstanding Sinophone Malaysian writers.

English and/or Malay. The word Malaya, which appears in the title, makes the volume problematic: in fact, it refers to Peninsular Malaysia and does not include Sarawak, nor Sabah. However, the anthology, which was published in West Malaysia also contains short stories by ethnic Chinese writers from Sarawak, such as Chang Kuei-hsing himself, Pan Yutong (1937-) and Liang Fang (1953-).

¹¹ Another notable writer often unproblematically labelled as Sinophone Malaysian is Sarawak-born Taiwanese novelist Lee Yung-ping. Lee himself, however, consistently rejected the inclusion of his works in the Sinophone Malaysian literary canon. In an interview from a few years ago, the writer refused to be identified as Malaysian, since Malaysia as a geopolitical entity was something completely foreign to him, a notion to which he felt no direct connection (Lee 2016).

¹² To further complicate the matter, one could also suggest a third marginal position for Chang's literature, in this case vis-à-vis Malaysian National literature that, according to the official discourse, can only be written in Malay, the national language. For an extensive discussion on the complicated relationship between National literature and Sinophone literature in the Malaysian context, see Paoliello 2018: 266-270.

3. Identity and mis/communication in the rainforest: *Wandao. Lanhua. Zuolunqiang*

Although Chang Kuei-hsing has undergone changes in nationality that might appear as rather lineal (British subject > Malaysian citizen > RoC national), especially in comparison with the intricacies of his literary identity mentioned in the previous section, the decision to relinquish his Malaysian citizenship in favour of an official Chinese identity is not as straightforward as it seems, since it might have been spurred not only by his growing personal attachment to Taiwan as his land of choice, but also by the political and social changes that were taking place in his native Sarawak. In this regard, *Wandao. Lanhua. Zuolunqiang* is a key text to understand both the development of Chang's Chinese identity as well as his disillusionment with an increasingly Malayanised homeland.

The novella, published for the first time in 1983 in the June issue of *Wen-ji*, one of Taiwan's leading literary magazines, was later included in Chang's collection *Keshan de ernü* (柯珊的兒女 "Keshan's Sons and Daughters," 1988) and more recently in *Shalong zumu* (沙龍祖母 "Grandma's Studio Photograph," 2013).¹³

The action takes place in northern Borneo, between Sarawak and Brunei, which at that time was in the process of gaining independence from the United Kingdom.¹⁴ The story is the account of the tragic trip undertaken by the main character, Buming, to reach the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, roughly corresponding to an embassy or consulate, in Bandar Seri Begawan, the capital of Brunei, to renew his RoC visa. However, due to massive flooding along the road, the bus he is travelling on is only able to reach the Bruneian border. From there, Buming must resort to lifts on private cars to reach his destination. On his way back to Sarawak, he must do the same and, after insisting for a long while, he is given a ride by a Malay family. However, miscommunication problems arise during the trip, mainly due to Buming's inability to speak and understand Malay and to their lack of knowledge of English or Chinese. Both the language barrier as well as the visual misunderstanding (Buming is unable to explain that the weapon he is carrying with him is just a toy, a gift for his nephew) lead the Malay family to think that Buming wants to hijack their vehicle. The police officers too, informed by a gas station employee the Malay driver was able to reach for help, misunderstand Buming's intentions and hastily surround him, ready to open fire at the first sign of hostility. The situation rapidly escalates as journalists and TV cameras reach the location and witness, together with the reader, as the protagonist is tragically shot to death by the police.

¹³ The present textual analysis has been performed on the 2013 edition of the novella.

¹⁴ Brunei's independence was formally proclaimed on January 1, 1984.

As can be inferred from this brief summary, mis/communication, ethnic identity and Malay/Chinese ethnic relations form the backbone of the story. Although it is true that “Chang’s rainforest writing hinges on the representation of magical localism” (Wu 2016: ch. 5), rather than introducing a fascinating land of wild animals and lush rainforests, in this earlier novella Chang Kuei-hsing leads the reader through the unappealing side of Borneo, characterised by gloomy weather, heavy rains reminiscent of the atmosphere in Gabriel García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*,¹⁵ rough roads that run through inhospitable and infernally hot areas, sleepy and somewhat sordid towns, as well as the pervasive presence of mud that swallows up Buming’s corpse at the end of the story. As the narration unfolds, it becomes apparent that the ethnic Chinese protagonist, while being a literary alter ego of Chang Kuei-hsing, the wanderer and exile, also carries the burden of being the epitome of the marginalisation of the ethnic Chinese in an increasingly Malay-centred society, where the national language (Malay, or *Bahasa Malaysia*) becomes a tool for mis/communication. A burden the protagonist carries in his name as well, which literally means “to not understand” and “unclear” (不明 in Chinese characters) and which highlights the series of misunderstandings that will eventually lead to the tragic finale of the novella.

Throughout the text, effective communication between Buming and the Malays he meets along the way is hindered by linguistic barriers and mutual mistrust. Placed at the very beginning of the novella, the dialogue between Buming and the Malay bus-ticket seller sets off the pace for the overall climate of questioning and doubt:

“Where are you going?”

“I’m sorry, I don’t speak Malay”, said Buming in English.

“You don’t speak Malay?! Where are you from?” asked the ticket seller in English, with his eyes half closed.

“Malaysia!” answered Buming.

“You are Malaysian, and you don’t speak Malay?!” uttered the ticket seller.

“That’s right: I am a Malaysian who doesn’t speak Malay”, said Buming (Chang 2013b: 267)¹⁶

¹⁵ As noted by Brian Bernards, “Chang [...] is frequently compared to the likes of literary giants such as Gabriel García Márquez, William Faulkner, and Joseph Conrad” (2013: 324).

¹⁶ This and all following translations from the Chinese are my own. The original reads as follows: 「你去哪兒？」不明用英文說：「對不起，我不會講馬來話。」睏得兩眼沒有完全睜開的售票員用英文說：「你不會講馬來話？你是哪國人？」不明說「馬來西亞。」售票員說：「你是馬來西亞人不會講馬來話？」不明說：「不錯，我是不會講馬來話的馬來西亞人。」

It is worth noting that, while the fact that Bumming switches to English, the former colonial language, responds to a practical communication need to which the ticket seller adjusts accordingly, it can also be perceived as a political stance, since “when deciding on which language to use one must take into consideration the political implications of using English and Standard Malay” (Ting 2001: 54–55).¹⁷

As the narration unfolds, we learn that Bumming’s national identity had been already questioned on his arrival in Sarawak by an immigration officer, whom he derogatorily refers to as “Malay pig” (馬來豬 *malai zhu*), an insult he uses several times in relation to Malay characters. In the new Malay-dominated Sarawak, an ethnic Chinese holding a Malaysian passport who doesn’t speak Malay, studied in Taiwan and plans to return there becomes a potential suspect. As a fellow Chinese Malaysian in Taiwan once told Bumming, “it’s all different now: English is not the official language anymore. When you go back, they’ll make things impossible for you! I’m quite sure they’ll want to have a chat with you” (Chang 2013b: 297).¹⁸ While, as we have seen, English could be used as Bumming did to accommodate the most basic and urgent practical communication needs, and while it is free of ethnic (although not colonial) biases, “it is not always the right language choice in Sarawak. Some people may not understand English, while others may regard the use of English as a rejection of their national identity” (Ting 2001: 55).

In a 2001 interview, Chang Kuei-hsing addresses both the identity issue as well as Malay – ethnic Chinese relations, seemingly corroborating such an idea:

After all, what’s our status in that place [i.e. Malaysia]? Do we live there as Chinese, as Chinese Malaysians or what else? In Malaysia, the anti-Chinese sentiment is very powerful, even if, on the surface, it might seem hard to notice. Especially after moving to Taiwan, the feeling that I had been pushed away has grown even stronger. My family says it feels good to come to Taiwan and see that everyone is Chinese here, it feels wonderful to them. They would rather stay here, even as beggars. And this kind of mood is quite widespread among Chinese Malaysians (Chang 2001).¹⁹

¹⁷ Chinese Malaysian scholar Ting Su-hie also notes a similar situation to Bumming’s and says: “On one occasion, while on a research field trip, a Malay participant insisted on speaking Standard Malay to me. He asked me why I could master English but still could not speak Malay proficiently, implying that I was not a true Malaysian” (Ting 2001: 55).

¹⁸ 現在不一樣了，英文已經不是官方語言，你回去一定給吊個半死！他們大概會約談你。

¹⁹ 我們到底是以中國人或馬來西亞的中國人或怎麼樣的身分存在於那個地方？馬來西亞也許在表面上看不出來，但其實在暗地裡他們排華的情況是相當嚴重的！尤其當我到台灣來之後，對過去的那種被排擠的感受更是強烈，我的家人就說來到台灣真爽，看到的都是中國人，他們說真爽！到台灣來就算當乞丐也都願意。那樣的心境，是馬來西亞華人很普遍的心聲。

It is not difficult to see Chang Kuei-hsing's own frustration reflected in Buming's anger directed to the immigration officer, whom he calls *babi* ("pig" in Malay). However, he is not the only character in the novella who expresses negative feelings towards ethnic Malays. Spider Face, a Chinese elder who sits next to him on the bus, repeatedly refers to Malays as "devils" (馬來鬼 *malai gui* in Chinese) and has a very low opinion of them. Spider Face, then, becomes the voice of the ethnic Chinese growing discontent with an increasingly Malayanised Sarawak:

Good you are going back to Taiwan. Here you only have food on your table if you wipe those Malay devils' asses. Go back to Taiwan! Those Malays are a bunch of good-for-nothings: they sleep until the sun burns their asses. Look at this one, he started snoring as soon as he got seated! (Chang 2013b: 307)²⁰

A similar idea is voiced by another man Buming meets along the way, this time a Westerner:

Buming asked: "Do you prefer the Malays or the Chinese?"

Blue Eyes answered: "Good question! I think I like Chinese people better. Malays are just bumming around all day, they spend their lives sleeping: they dream at night and sleepwalk during the day!" (Chang 2013b: 311)²¹

Both Spider Face and Blue Eyes seem to reinforce the idea of the "lazy native," a typically colonialist perception lacking even the slightest scientific evidence that, according to Syed Hussein Alatas, "was drawn on the basis of cursory observations, sometimes with strong built-in prejudices, or misunderstandings and faulty methodologies" (1977: 112). Moreover, both characters seem to corroborate the fact that "Malays often are labelled as lazy" (Chiu 2000: 589). However, while Blue Eyes' prejudices stem from an imperialist mind-set, Spider Face, an ethnic Chinese, seems to be moved by resentment, a feeling that becomes clear when he voices his concern for the hardships faced by many younger Chinese Malaysians:

The sons of a few friends of mine are Taiwan graduates, as well. I've told them not to let their sons come back here, but they just didn't listen. Well, now they are back and what

²⁰ 你回台灣沒錯，在這邊幫馬來鬼擦屁股才有飯吃，回台灣好，那些馬來人，一個個都沒用，早上睡到太陽早上睡到太陽晒得屁股冒煙才起身，你看這個馬來人[...]一坐下來睡得鼻孔八個洞！

²¹ 不明說：「你喜歡馬來人還是中國人？」藍眼說：「問得好，我想我喜歡中國人，馬來人一天到晚都渾渾噩噩的，好像一年到頭都在濫睡，晚上做夢，白天夢遊。[...]」

for?! It's those Malay devils who couldn't care less about your Taiwanese degrees, not me!
You can only count on yourselves. (Chang 2013b: 306–307)²²

The fact that Taiwanese and other foreign degrees were not officially recognised in Malaysia put many Chinese Malaysian returnees such as Buming in an uncompetitive and marginal professional position, since they were often “denied and scoffed at on the spot by potential employers because their education qualification was not recognised by the Malaysian government” (Soon 2014). While professional marginalisation was – and, to a certain extent, still is – a common cause for disillusionment among younger Chinese Malaysians who decided not to move back to Malaysia, it also became a decisive factor in forming a new transnational and fluid identity within the Sinosphere, as is the case with Chang Kuei-hsing himself.²³ In the novella, Chang also seems to touch upon the idea that, for many Chinese Malaysians, their official identity and the (self-)perceived one do not always correspond. In theory, Buming's status as Malaysian is undeniable, since his passport says so and Chang decides to provide such apparently unquestionable fact by reproducing Buming's passport information in the text (Chang 2013b: 299–300). Despite this, however, his status as a Malaysian is questioned throughout the text: the Malays he interacts with do not understand how, as a Malaysian, he doesn't speak the national language, the policemen call him “Chinaman” (支那人 *zhinaren*),²⁴ completely erasing his Malaysian identity, and the reporter from Radio Brunei addresses him with the Chinese term 中國人 (*zhongguoren*), which literally means “person of China”. Another ethnic Chinese journalist, who presents himself as a mediator between Buming and the police forces, uses the expression “descendants of the Yellow Emperor” (炎黃子孫 *Yanhuang zisun*), stressing their common ethnic and cultural ancestry. Hence, Chang Kuei-hsing presents Buming as an ethnic Chinese whose identity is fluid, situational, subject to constant scrutiny and, most importantly, always incomplete: an incomplete Malaysian unable to speak Malay, and an incomplete Chinese, who needs a visa to re-enter the RoC/Taiwan.

²² 我有幾個朋友的兒子也是台灣大學畢業的，我同他們講叫他們兒子不要回來，他們不聽我的，好，回來了，有屁用！不是我看不起你們台灣畢業的，馬來鬼不承認都沒相干，你要靠自己。

²³ The problems faced by Chinese Malaysians with Taiwanese degrees is discussed in other Sinophone Malaysian texts, as well. See, for example, Shang Wanyun (商晚筠)'s novella *Xialihe* (夏麗赫, 1978), in which Yali, the ethnic Chinese narrator, is confronted with the same difficulties described by Chang in *Wandao. Lanhua. Zuolunqiang*.

²⁴ The term derives from 支那 (Shina しな), one of several Japanese toponyms for China. Although it did not originally have negative connotations, it became pejorative in the context of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945). For an illuminating discussion on the issue, see Fogel (2012).

However, through the end of the narration, national and ethnic identities all become irrelevant as a new social identity is cast upon him: he is now the criminal (歹徒 *daitu*) who hijacked the Malay family's car. At a loss, Buming tries to break away from the police by holding the family's daughter hostage, hence conforming to his fate and this imposed, new persona (Chang 2013b: 336). Allegorically, Buming's desperate flight can be considered a metaphor for many Chinese Malaysians' emigration and displacement; his final drowning into muddy waters powerfully symbolising Chang's (as well as many fellow Chinese Malaysians') complete and categorical abandonment of his homeland. Chang Kuei-hsing admitted to his feeling of having escaped from a backward village that couldn't offer any good prospects, hence his unwillingness to elaborate on his Sarawakian memories for the first ten years in Taiwan (Chang 2001).

Additionally, Buming's body slowly sinking into the mud is also a tragic symbol: the epitome of the eroded status of languages other than Malay in a new society in which Malaysians who don't master *Bahasa Malaysia* have lost their ability to communicate. Miscommunication and lack of understanding between Buming and the Malay characters is a pivotal issue in the novella, central to the unfolding of the narration from the beginning to its tragic outcome. In the second half of *Wandao. Lanhua. Zuolunqiang*, after Buming has been successful in obtaining his RoC visa in Brunei, his return to Sarawak (from where he is expected to embark a plane for Taiwan) is hindered not only by the temporary suspension of transportation options between the two places but also, and most decisively, by his inability to make himself understood. Desperate to get a ride on a private vehicle on its way out of Kuala Belait (Brunei) and into Sarawak, Buming throws himself in front of a red car. While the Malay family of four stares at him in astonishment, he tries to make himself understood, but to no avail. Brandishing the Dayak machete he bought as a souvenir and convinced that the four have agreed to give him a ride, Buming squeezes himself into the car, next to the Malay siblings, a boy and a girl. His efforts to communicate with the young girl, however, fall on deaf ears:

Hello! My name is Shen Buming. You really don't speak *English!*? [...] If you don't speak English, then talk to me in Malay, it's ok, you can speak and use your hands and gestures at the same time, just like I am doing right now. That way I can understand something, perhaps (Chang 2013b: 321).²⁵

²⁵ 哈囉，我叫沈不明，妳真的不會講鶯歌力嘶嗎？[...] 妳不會講英文，就講馬來文，沒關係，妳可以邊講邊做手勢和表情，像我現在一樣，也許我可以聽懂一點。

Chang Kuei-hsing makes *Bahasa Malaysia* incomprehensible not only to Buming, but to the reader as well. While dialogues in English, the other non-Sinitic language of communication used in the novella, are rendered in Mandarin, thus making them accessible to Sinophone readers, utterances in Malay are always reproduced with a mix of symbols, letters of the Latin alphabet and meaningless Sinitic characters. This happens, for instance, when Buming turns the TV on and two Malay women are chatting: “△○啲嘢★RKMY 嗚唔↵↓”(Chang 2013b: 312), but also when he is in the car with the Malay family, thus causing the reader to experience the same feeling of confusion. The impossibility to communicate and the feeling of having been misunderstood all along are the cause for frustration, disorientation and despair, all feelings Chang Kuei-hsing experienced in Sarawak and that pushed him away from his homeland, in search of a place where his ethnic identity would not be dismissed. Therefore, while it is true that *Wandao. Lanhua. Zuolunqiang* constitutes one of Chang’s earliest examples of rainforest writing, it presents his native land in an unprocessed way. Here, Chang’s Borneo has not been reconstructed through the prism of memory and it has yet to become the literary site where the history (and the stories) of the ethnic Chinese unfolds; it is not yet what Wong Lihlih considers to be a rich and complex literary setting, a site for the production of a sentimental narrative of the rainforest (2015: 110), nor is it the homeland reclaimed through memory as in later works, such as the already-mentioned *Sailian zhi ge* and *Yezhu du he*. It is, on the contrary, a crude realm, a site of constant confrontation and failed communication, a place where ability to communicate in *Bahasa Malaysia* and national identity are first tested, then dismissed. Additionally, it is a hostile homeland where people are dehumanised, as shown by Chang Kuei-hsing’s choice to almost always address characters by nicknames.²⁶

Lastly, although the novella is entirely set between Sarawak and Brunei, it should be considered a product of Chang’s Taiwanisation, in which his native rainforest is used as a literary gimmick to underline the author’s embracing of a local, Taiwanese consciousness (Wang 2014). Hence, *Wandao. Lanhua. Zuolunqiang* can be considered one of Chang Kuei-hsing’s earliest examples of translocalism, in which although not physically present, Taiwan is used as the bridging stone between the homeland and Chineseness.²⁷ From one island to another, Chang frees himself from the suffocating homeland that, due to Malaynisation, is not “home” but just “land” and at the same time attempts to recreate it

²⁶ Apart from the already mentioned Spider Face and Blue Eyes and the many Malay characters who are often insultingly referred to as “pigs,” the Malay father whose car Buming forces himself into is called Fatty Ears, his wife is nicknamed Heavy Makeup, while Fatima, the daughter, is often referred to as Orchid, because of the flower in her hair.

²⁷ Wu Chia-rong (2016) addresses the role of Taiwan as a cultural medium between China and Malaysia in the fiction of both Chang Kuei-hsing and Lee Yung-ping.

in a safer, new homeland where his identity is not questioned and his right to Chineseness is not hindered. Symbolically, Buming's only safe haven throughout the novella is the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, where things go smoothly, where communication flows and where there is no trace of the gloominess of the outside world.

4. Conclusion

While Chang Kuei-hsing has been harshly accused by local Sinophone Sarawakian authors such as Tian Si of presenting a distorted version of Borneo (Chai 2016: 8), it cannot be denied that he is one of the key authors that shaped Taiwanese and other Sinophone readers' consciousness vis-à-vis his Southeast Asian homeland and the often-difficult situation of Chinese Sarawakian communities. Although Chang's consistent use of the Sarawakian rainforest as the main background for his short and long fiction becomes his literary trademark only with the novel *Sailian zhi ge*, the analysis of *Wandao. Lanhua. Zuolunqiang* has shown that his homeland has been present in his literary imagination since the early eighties, albeit serving a different purpose. Far from displaying the fictionalised and magical Borneo of his later works, the novella proposes an unprocessed local environment as seen from the perspective of a Chinese Malaysian intellectual who is still coming to terms with a new Malay-dominated Malaysia, where the languages, the culture and the identity of the ethnic Chinese are being unapologetically pushed aside. Therefore, this article has demonstrated how the novella, by engaging with issues such as mis/communication and the challenges faced by Chinese Malaysians, not only helps us understand the personal and literary evolution of one of the most important Sinophone writers in Taiwan, but also the painful process of identity de/construction and re/construction faced by many ethnic Chinese in post-independence Malaysia. Moreover, by directly addressing issues pertaining to national identity, the analysis of the novella compels us to problematise the labels with which transnational Sinophone writers such as Chang Kuei-hsing are often presented: while definitely a Sinophone author, his Malaysian identity is complex and should be analysed more thoroughly. Perhaps, unless the term Malaysia is enriched with the plurality of East Malaysia's historical, cultural and ethnic uniqueness, it should be discarded in favour of his Sarawakian identity: that would not only do justice to the centrality of North Borneo in his works, but also to Sinophone Sarawakian literature, a literary system in constant danger of being silenced and hidden under the idea of a monolithic and homogeneous Sinophone Malaysian literature.

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Local language vs. national language: The Lampung language maintenance in the Indonesian context

Nurlaksana Eko Rusminto, Farida Ariyani, Ag. Bambang Setiyadi, and Gede Eka Putrawan

The native speakers of the Lampung language are now very much in the minority on their land. The Lampung language that is almost no longer used as a means of communication in the family domain has led to language loss among children and young people in Lampung. Although several studies on the Lampung language maintenance have appeared in the literature, the focus was only restricted to language maintenance in general. As a result, no comprehensive insights and implications appear to exist. Thus, the aim of this paper is to elucidate the issues through a study which focuses on Lampung language maintenance among young people, which was conducted with a quantitative approach. The findings of this study indicate that the Lampung language, like other local languages in Indonesia, has issues that need to be seriously addressed so that it can be still maintained a means of communication. Young families of the native people of Lampung almost no longer use the Lampung language as a means of communication with other family members and relatives. Therefore, to avoid any potential conflict of interest between the Lampung language and the national language, Indonesian, the findings imply that the preservation and maintenance of the Lampung language should be done through a culture-based approach, which emphasizes a sense of pride and love for the Lampung language as cultural wealth and a product of the civilization of native people of Lampung. The limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

Keywords: Indonesian language, Lampung language, language maintenance, local language, family domain, minority language

1. Introduction

Lampung, one of provinces located on Sumatera (English: Sumatra) island, is a culturally and ethnically diverse province in Indonesia with multilingual speech communities (Sunarti *et al.* 2019). Those who

are said to be Lampung people, either Lampung Saibatin or Lampung Pepadun¹, are indigenous people of Lampung who share native customs, traditions, and language (Katubi 2006). The Lampung language itself, one of native local languages in Indonesia, has several strategic functions for Lampung people such as a symbol of pride and identity and a means of communication within Lampung family and community.

However, the existence of this local language in the lives of its speech community is no longer reflecting its strategic functions as a local language due to language shifting. The Lampung language, at the present time, is only used in a very limited context by limited users. The native speakers are very much in the minority on their own land (Levang and Prayoga 2003, as cited in Katubi 2006). It is only used in the family domain at home when a parent is communicating with another parent, not with their children (Hasan, 2009; Rusminto, Ariyani and Setiyadi 2018). The fact that the Lampung language is hardly used as a means of communication in the family domain has led to language loss among children and young people in Lampung. The family is in fact the main domain where Lampung language skills are developed. Seen from the language attitude perspective, however, they still have a positive attitude to their native language. Older adults have more positive attitudes with stronger Lampung language maintenance compared to those younger (Wulandari 2018).

A large body of data is available concerning potential language extinction. Hawkins (2005) states that half of the 6,809 languages currently in use in the world are predicted to become extinct and no longer exist on the Earth within the next 500 years (Austin and Sallabank 2013; Vari-Bogiri 2005). Tondo (2009) states that some of the 742 languages in Indonesia will gradually become extinct. Some of the languages are already approaching extinction. Therefore, if the situation that the Lampung language is no longer used as a means of communication in the family domain continues to exist, it is believed that the language will be extinct in the near future, as experienced by other local languages around the world (Austin and Sallabank 2013; Rafieyan *et al.* 2013; Tondo 2009; Vari-Bogiri 2005). If there is no change in attitudes and policies towards the preservation and maintenance of the language, it is estimated that Lampung language will become extinct in 60 to 70 years (Hasan 2009).

The general factors that contribute to the extinction of these local languages are also well known. In Indonesia, more specifically, Tondo (2009) states that the factors that lead to the extinction of local languages include:

¹ Lampung indigenous people, based on their cultural tradition, are classified into two groups, Lampung *Saibatin* and Lampung *Pepadun* (Puspawidjaja *et al.* 1987, as cited in Katubi 2006). Most of Lampung *Saibatin* people, also known as Lampung Coast people, live along the East, South, and West Coasts of Lampung, while Lampung *Pepadun* people inhabit highland areas of Lampung.

1. the influence of the majority language in which the local language is spoken. A local language that is unable to compete with other languages in the same region can transition from a high-level language (religion, education, work) to a low-level language (family and friendship). If the language continues to be pushed around, it might become a dying language and then extinct eventually (Gunarwan 2006; Tondo 2009);
2. bilingual or even multilingual speech communities;
3. globalization. The current period of globalization, which takes place in various aspects of human life, such as economy, community, politics and culture, has enabled language speakers to interact and communicate effectively with speakers of other languages from other countries, especially English-speaking countries;
4. migration. The survival of a language is also dictated by the movement of people out of their home areas due to jobs, schooling, family or many other factors;
5. inter-ethnic marriages. Social interactions among ethnic groups in Indonesia, inter-ethnic marriages in particular, also promote the extinction of local languages;
6. natural catastrophes and calamities. These can also lead to a language's extinction as happened with the Paulohi language speakers around 1918, drought, war, disease, earthquakes, tsunamis and so on may wipe out language speakers;
7. lack of respect for an ethnic language of one's own. Everywhere, this can happen and seems to happen to the younger generation;
8. lack of local language communication frequency in various domains, especially in family domain. This may indicate that there is a gap between the older generation and that of the younger in which linguistic transfer across generations is at a standstill;
9. economic factors. This aspect also indicates that many local languages are on the edge of extinction. Many local language speakers tend to use other languages (for example, English) for a particular purpose. An economic motive, for instance, exists. This also influences individuals to both actively and passively learn and use the language. This means, among other things, to get a better job and livelihood; and
10. the use of Indonesian language as the official language in various settings e.g. in education and government settings (Ferguson 2006; Tondo 2009; Liddicoat and Baldauf 2008; Rusminto, Ariyani *et al.* 2018).

In addition to the data that have been presented in the literature, based on our observations of the Lampung language, several reasons that lead to language loss have been found, which include:

1. only a limited number of speech communities still use the Lampung language (generally they use Indonesian);
2. the Lampung language is not used in formal education and in the work settings (Indonesian is generally used), and
3. the policy of fostering and developing Indonesian as a national language indirectly causes the Lampung language to become a marginalized language. In other words, the facts show that the existence of Indonesian as a national language is often the main factor that prevents Lampung language speakers from maintaining their native language. This fact also poses a conflict of interest when maintaining the Lampung language.

Several studies on Lampung language maintenance have appeared in the literature, but the focus was only restricted to language maintenance in general. As a result, no comprehensive insights and implications appear to exist. Thus, the aim of this paper is to elucidate the issues through a study which focuses on the Lampung language maintenance among young people. Several suggestions as how to avoid any potential conflict of interest between the Lampung language and the national language, Indonesian, are also provided.

2. Lampung and the Lampung language

Lampung is a province of about 4,624,238 inhabitants in which most of them are outsiders (immigrants) coming from other provinces in Indonesia and the rest are native people of Lampung, 65% and 35% respectively (Puspawidjaja 1982, as cited in Katubi 2006). Therefore, the native speakers of the Lampung language are very much in the minority (Levang and Prayoga 2003 as cited in Katubi, 2006) and they are divided into two groups: native people of Lampung with Saibatin tradition and those with Pepadun (Puspawidjaja et al. 1987 as cited in Katubi 2006).

The Lampung language, which is classified as part of Western Malayo-Polynesian (Anderbeck 2006; Frawley 2003), has two main dialects, i.e. Lampung Api (known as A-dialect or Pesisir) and Lampung Nyo (known as O-dialect or Abung), whereas Komering, which is oftentimes considered as part of A-dialect, is believed to be a totally different language (Hanawalt 2006).

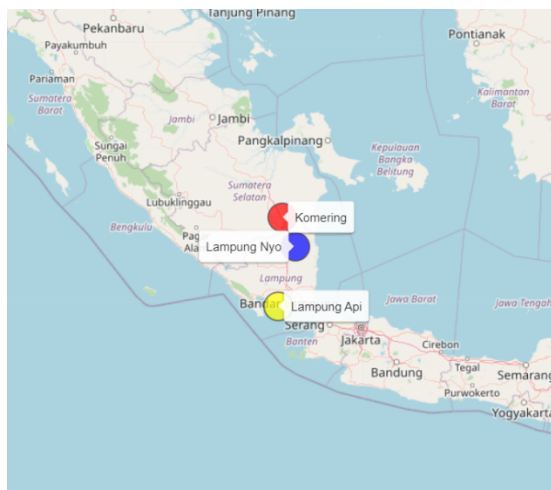


Figure 1. Map of speech varieties of the Lampung language (source: Glottolog 2021)

Figure 1. shows the varieties of the Lampung language. The yellow illustrates Lampung Api, the blue represents Lampung Nyo, and the red refers to Komerling (Glottolog 2021). Lampung Api (coded ‘ljp’), spoken by 827,000 native speakers (Ethnologue 2020a), is found in various locations such as Sekala Brak, Melinting-Maringgai, Pesisir Rajabasa, Pesisir Teluk, Pesisir Semaka, Pesisir Krui, Belalau, Ranau, Komerling, Kayu Agung, Way Kanan, Sungkai, and Pubian (Sujadi 2012), while Lampung Nyo (coded ‘abl’), spoken by 180,000 native speakers (Ethnologue 2020b) is present in various locations such as Abung, Sukadana, Menggala/Tulang Bawang, and West Tulang Bawang (Sujadi 2012). In total, the Lampung language is spoken by about 1 million native speakers. In some literature, it is reported that this language is spoken by around 1.5 million people (Anderbeck 2006).

3. The Lampung language maintenance

Language maintenance (and shift) has to do with the connection between “change or stability in habitual language use, on the one hand, and ongoing psychological, social or cultural processes, on the other hand, when populations differing in language are in contact with each other” (Fishman 1964: 32). Hoffman (1991) further states that language maintenance is used to refer to a state where community members always make an effort to keep their language they have always been speaking, while language shift refers to where a speech community adopts another language and does not try to maintain their native language.

The well-known language maintenance and other issues that are related to local and minority languages phenomena have been favorite topics for investigation since the 1990’s (Cohn and Ravindranath 2014). It is reported that language maintenance in Indonesia is in a paradoxical situation

with few local languages in western Indonesia having good opportunities for maintenance compared with local languages in eastern Indonesia (Musgrave 2014).

Despite a large number of native speakers, about 1 million, the Lampung language can be said as a minority language since the figure is only 11% of the total population of Lampung, a province of 9,007,848 inhabitants (BPS-Statistics of Lampung Province, 2021). Therefore, to maintain the Lampung language, considerable efforts have been made, see for example, the development of an Indonesian – Lampung bilingual dictionary (Ariyani 2015; Ariyani *et al.* 1999), a pocket book for daily conversation in Lampung language (Ariyani and Rahmansyah 2015), a pocket book for daily conversation in Lampung, Indonesian, English (Ariyani *et al.* 2015). The presence of the reading materials has created a “language-rich environment” (Pauwels 2016: 125) that is expected to make an impact on inspiring younger generations to use their own heritage language. The local administration of Lampung has also been in an effort to maintain the language through the issuance of policies and regulations. The Lampung language is a cultural wealth that must be maintained and developed (Local Regulation of Lampung Province on Cultural Maintenance of Lampung, 2008, para. 7). Although Indonesian is a national language which is used in various settings, the Lampung language is also recommended be used as language of instruction in educational settings and government’s meetings (Local Regulation of Lampung Province on Cultural Maintenance of Lampung, 2008, para. 8). Other local regulations have also been issued, see for example, Local Regulation of the Governor of Lampung Province Number 39/2014 concerning Lampung language as a mandatory local content subject in elementary, primary, and secondary schools and the Local Regulation of the Governor of Lampung Province Number 4/2011 concerning Lampung language maintenance, development, and preservation.

4. Indonesian as the national language of the Republic of Indonesia

Indonesia has 707 languages that are spoken by more than 600 ethnic groups living in 34 provinces including 7,217 districts (Zein 2020). Based on the spread of languages in each province, Indonesia comprises 737 indigenous/local languages; however, based on the current statistics, Indonesia has 652 living indigenous languages and one national language although not all the local languages in the eastern part of Indonesia have been well documented (Badan Bahasa 2017 as cited in Zein 2020).

Indonesian is the state language of the Republic of Indonesia as stated in Chapter XI, Article 36 in the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia 1945; Sneddon 2003). In other words, Indonesian is a national language and the only official language in Indonesia (Nababan 1991). Since then, Indonesian language has been well documented and developed through national language policies and regulations (see, for example, The Interior Ministry Regulation

No. 40/2007 regarding the Guidelines for the Regional Heads in the Conservation and Cultivation of the State Language and Indigenous Languages, The Government Regulation No. 57/2014 regarding the Development, Cultivation and Maintenance of Indonesian Language and Literature, Law No. 24 of 2009 regarding the Flag, Language, Symbol of the State and the National Anthem, and Presidential Regulation No. 63 of 2019 regarding the Use of Indonesian).

5. Method

This research adopted a quantitative approach, with a total of 100 participants who took part in the current study. Most of them (81%) were male and the rest (19%) were female in the age range of 20 – 35 years old by an average of 29 years old. The majority of them live at the same home with their family members, e.g. husband/wife and children and most of them were also married with a husband/wife of the same ethnic group, i.e. Lampung ethnic group.

The data were collected through a questionnaire which was to investigate if the Lampung language was used in the family domain. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section focused on demographic questions, the second section looked at the Lampung language use and maintenance in the family domain with five questions, the third investigated language maintenance in a broader sense with two questions. In order to see whether the design of the questionnaire was suitable to achieve the aim of this study, this instrument received a pilot testing (McQuirk and O'Neill 2016). The pilot test was carried out with 10 students majoring in language and arts education in a public university to make sure the instructions and items of the instrument were clearly stated in an understandable way and reasonable in length (Schleef 2014). A descriptive statistics method using SPSS 23 for Windows was used to quantitatively analyzed the collected data. It was used to measure participants' responses to the instrument through frequency of their language use in the family domain.

6. Results and discussion

6.1. The existence of the Lampung language in the family domain

To start with, the participants under investigation were asked about their language use in the family domain as presented in Table 1.

No.	Language Used	Frequency	Percent
1	Lampung	29	29
2	Indonesian	22	22
3	Indonesian-Lampung	49	49
	Total	100	100

Table 1. Lampung language use within family domain

Most of them (49 respondents or 49%) stated that they use a combination of Indonesian and Lampung language in the family domain. A total of 29 respondents (29%) stated that they use the Lampung language in the family domain, and the rest (22 respondents or 22%) use Indonesian. This clearly indicates that only a small proportion (less than 30%) of native Lampung families use the Lampung language as the only means of communication in the family domain, while the rest (more than 70%) mix codes (Indonesian – Lampung) and use only Indonesian as a means of communication.

Regarding the Lampung language users in the family domain, the participants' responses to this item are presented in the following Table 2.

No.	Language Use	Frequency	Percent
<i>The Lampung language is used to communicate by ...</i>			
1	parents, grandparents, father, mother, and other relatives, e. g. uncle and aunt	75	75
2	all family members	15	15
3	no family member	10	10
	Total	100	100

Table 2. Lampung language users within family domain

A total of 75 respondents (75%) stated that the Lampung language is used as a means of communication by parents, grandparents, father, mother, and other relatives e.g. uncles and aunts. Only 15 respondents (15%) stated that the Lampung language is used by all family members when communicating in the family domain. Finally, the rest (10 respondents or 10%) stated that the Lampung language is not used at all in the family domain. This explicitly suggests that the Lampung language is only used by the older generation, not by the children or younger generation. As for the Javanese language, it is reported that its maintenance depends on input from family members, particularly older persons to their children (Kurniasih 2006). In other words, home plays a vital role in indigenous language maintenance since it is the right place where the language is taught and reinforced. These findings confirm that a minority language is more frequently used when communicating with family

members or relatives (Connaughton-Crean and Duibhir 2017; Efendi 2020). Seen from its contexts of use, the participants' responses are presented in Table 3.

No.	The Lampung Language Contexts of Use (Daily Activities)	Frequency	Percent
1	Family life or household affairs	50	50
2	Emotions, e. g. anger, love, and fear	30	30
3	Spirituality	13	13
4	Others	7	7
	Total	100	100

Table 3. *The Lampung language contexts of use within family domain*

Table 3. shows that the participants mainly use the Lampung language in daily activities in the context of family life or household affairs (50%), in the context of emotions e.g. anger, love, and fear (30%), in the context of spirituality e.g. offering prayers and complaining to God (13%), and in other contexts of life (7%). This illustrates that very few Lampung families use the Lampung language as a means of communication in any other contexts other than the above-mentioned. Most of them use the language for family- and household-related matters. These findings are similar to findings arrived by Ting and Ling (2013; Zuri *et al.* 2018), that indigenous language remains extremely strong in family and religious contexts (Dhanawaty *et al.* 2020).

Table 4. shows the motivations for using and not using the Lampung language.

No.	Language Use	Frequency	Percent
<i>What motivates you to use the Lampung language ...</i>			
1	It is a habit from generation to generation	30	30
2	My extended families still use it	25	25
3	My Lampung language is pride	24	24
4	To instill noble values of Lampung culture and civilization	21	21
<i>If you no longer use the Lampung language, what are the reasons?</i>			
1	My neighbourhood use Indonesian	35	35
2	I use Indonesian, the national language	25	25
3	Lampung language is not a medium of instruction at schools	25	25
4	Indonesian is used much in the workforce in every sector	15	15
	Total	100	100

Table 4. *Motivation for using and not using Lampung language within family domain*

Meanwhile, in terms of motivation for the use of the Lampung language as a means of communication in the family domain, a total of 30% of the respondents stated that the Lampung language is still used

in the family because of habit from generation to generation. A total of 25% of them stated that it is still used because their extended families still use it. In addition, a total of 24% of them stated that they still use the Lampung language because they consider it as a pride that helps them to maintain it. Finally, only 21% of them stated that the Lampung language is the most appropriate means of instilling the noble values of Lampung culture and civilization. This indicates that the main reason the Lampung language is still used as a means of communication in the family domain is respect for their elders or predecessors who have been using the language from generation to generation in family life. These findings are similar to Ting and Ling's (2013) findings that indigenous languages are still strongly used in the family domain. The native speakers show great pride in their indigenous language, which is in line with Zuri *et al.*'s (2018) findings. It is also clear that a minority language plays an important role to retain identity of its native speakers, as also shown by the findings arrived by Chuchu and Noorashid (2015); Dhanawaty *et al.* (2020) and Zuri *et al.* (2018).

The respondents also have reasons for not using the Lampung language in the family domain. A total of 35% of them stated that people in their neighbourhood use Indonesian, which affects their language choice for communication in the family domain in favour of Indonesian, to allow them easily interact with their neighbours. They (25%) also stated that they are driven by a sense of nationalism towards Indonesian, the national language. A total of 25% of them stated that the Lampung language is not used extensively because Indonesian is being and will be always used as language of instruction at schools and universities. Finally, a total of 15% of them stated that Indonesian is used greatly by the workforce in every sector, and therefore they always get their children to use Indonesian as a means of communication in life. These findings illustrate that the main reason for not using the Lampung language as a means of communication is practical interests, i.e. they accustom their children to communicate in Indonesian because it is used in the neighbourhood and in every sector of society, e.g. education and work. In addition, Lampung as a linguistic ecology consisting of several local languages including Lampung, Sundanese, Javanese, Bugisnese, Basemah, and Balinese (Language and Book Development Agency 2021) with more than 30 ethnic groups (BPS-Central Bureau of Statistics 2011) is a truly multilingual and multicultural context. The participants under investigation hope that their children will not encounter difficulties when communicating with the world around them. All this shows that the use of indigenous languages by the young generation has declined, as the findings arrived by Chuchu and Noorashid (2015) have shown. If this situation persists, the Lampung language is estimated to become extinct in 60 – 70 years (Hasan, 2009) or in 75 – 100 years (Gunarman 1994, as cited in Gunarwan 2002). In other words, the language might experience systematic extinction in the future as experienced by some other indigenous languages around the globe (Austin and Sallabank

2013; Rafieyan *et al.* 2013; Tondo 2009; Vari-Bogiri 2005). The fact is Indonesian is widely used in every domain of communication, and even an indigenous language with more than 80 million native speakers like Javanese is at risk of falling out of use (Cohn and Ravindranath 2014).

6.2. Efforts Made by Native People of Lampung to Maintain the Lampung Language

Facing the shifting of the Lampung language in the lives of the people of Lampung, actually a considerable amount of effort has been made by the families of the native people of Lampung as presented in Table 5.

No.	Maintenance Efforts	Frequency	Percent
1	Teach my children about noble values of Lampung culture and civilization	33	33
2	Keep trying to motivate my family members to always use the Lampung language	21	21
3	Teach the Lampung language to my children from an early age	20	20
4	Require family members to use the Lampung language	10	10
5	Listen to Lampung language songs	11	11
6	Through storytelling	5	5
Total		100	100

Table 5. Efforts to maintain the Lampung language within family domain

A total of 33% of them stated that they preserve and maintain the Lampung language by using the language to teach their children the noble values of Lampung culture and civilization. They (21%) also keep trying to motivate their family members to always use the Lampung language since this language plays an important role as their local cultural wealth. They stated that they teach the Lampung language to their children from an early age to make them familiar with the language and require their family members to use the Lampung language in the family domain at home (20% and 10% respectively). They (11%) also listen to Lampung language songs. A few of them (5%) also make an effort to maintain the Lampung language through storytelling to make their children grow up with a strong tradition of Lampung oral storytelling.

The findings show that the speakers' love and desire to maintain the Lampung language as a sign of richness of Lampung culture and civilization seem to be really strong, although most of the families of the native Lampung people have begun to abandon the Lampung language as a means of communication in the family domain. It is clear that they are trying to implement what is called as

family-language policy, especially heritage-language-only policy (Gupta 2020), at home with their children to maintain their indigenous language (King, Fogle and Logan-Terry 2008 as cited in Berardi-Wiltshire 2017). However, despite their positive attitude towards the Lampung language, they provide less Lampung language exposure to their children than, for example, activities or media outside of their home. This situation resonates with Nagpal and Nicoladis’s findings (2010), where parents do not provide adequate minority language exposure to their children outside of home.

6.3. Obstacles and Challenges of the Lampung Language Maintenance

Some obstacles and challenges of the Lampung language maintenance also exist. The respondents’ responses to this part are presented in Table 6.

No.	Obstacles and challenges of the Lampung language maintenance	Frequency	Percent
1	The existence of Indonesian—the national language	81	81
2	The existence of other local languages	17	17
3	The existence of foreign languages	2	2
	Total	100	100

Table 6. Obstacles and challenges of the Lampung language maintenance

Table 6. illustrates that most of the participants (81%) stated that the national language, Indonesian, is the main obstacle to maintain the Lampung language. It is the main competitor to the local language. A total of 17% stated that other local languages that exist in Lampung also prevent the success of the Lampung language maintenance. Only a few of them (2%) stated that foreign languages are the obstacle to the Lampung language maintenance.

It is clear that Indonesian as the national language is the main competitor in the efforts to maintain the Lampung language. This is also reinforced by the fact that there is a conflict of interest between the realities of the Lampung language use in the family domain and regulations regarding the function and position of Indonesian as the national language. As stipulated in the policy on the national language promulgated in Law Number 24 of 2009 concerning the flag, language and state symbol, as well as national anthem, as specifically outlined in Presidential Regulation No. 63 of 2019 concerning the use of Indonesian, Indonesian is the national language as well as the state language that must be used in various aspects of life by the Indonesian people. In its position as the national language, Indonesian has the following four functions:

1. a symbol of national pride,

2. a symbol of national identity,
3. a unifying medium for different ethnic groups, and
4. a means of connection between cultures and regions.

In addition, being the state language, Indonesian also has the following four functions:

1. the official language of the state,
2. the language of instruction in education,
3. a means of communication at the national level for the purposes of national and government interests planning and development, and
4. a means of developing culture and technological knowledge.

This fact, inevitably, places the Indonesian language in a very dominant position in various aspects of the life of Indonesian people and hardly provides an opportunity for local languages, including Lampung, to take a strategic role in people's lives (Halim 1976).

7. Conclusion

The Lampung language, like other local languages in Indonesia, has issues that need to be seriously addressed so that it can be still maintained a means of communication. Young families of native people of Lampung hardly use the Lampung language as a means of communication with other family members and relatives. Therefore, serious efforts must be made to maintain the Lampung language and relieve the pressure from other languages, especially Indonesian.

This study has several implications. It is hard and challenging to maintain a local language as stated by Mbetse (2011), who states that in developed cities and villages, local languages do not get important positions and functions anymore because they have been taken over by Indonesian. However, it is not impossible to maintain a local language. It is undeniable that as the national language, Indonesian has a very dominant position and function compared to the Lampung language. Thus, efforts to maintain the Lampung language often clash with efforts to foster and develop Indonesian as the national language. For this reason, the maintenance of the Lampung language through a formal approach like Indonesian cannot be applied to maintaining and preserving this language. Therefore, in our view the preservation and maintenance of the Lampung language should be done through a culture-based approach, which emphasizes a sense of pride and love for the Lampung language as the cultural wealth and a symbol of the civilization of the native people of Lampung. This could be done, for example, through promoting and developing Lampung language-

related activities through arts and culture. Through this approach, it is hoped that the Lampung language, as an inseparable part of Lampung culture and civilization, can still be used and maintained, and imbued with a strong sense of belonging by its speech community (Rusminto 2016). In addition, the Lampung language is also predicted to become extinct in 60 to 70 years (Hasan 2009) and in 75 – 100 years (Gunarman 1994 as cited in Gunarman 2002). This is likely because the native speakers of the Lampung language are very much in the minority in Lampung (Levang and Prayoga 2003 as cited in Katubi 2006). Therefore, in response to the issues exposed, all parties such as “decision makers at different levels – individuals, families, traditional organizations (*adat*), and government institutions” should work hand in hand to maintain the Lampung language through interdisciplinary language management (Arka 2013: 74).

Indeed, an important limitation of our study is that the number of participants and empirical data are quite restricted. Therefore, our findings cannot be used as conclusive evidence for Lampung as a whole province. However, this study provides new insights into the nature of Lampung native young people’s local language practices in the family domain and their attempts to maintain the Lampung language. Therefore, to deeply comprehend the issue under investigation, further studies on the issue through observations of naturally-occurring Lampung language practices in various settings across Lampung with more advanced and sophisticated quantitative and qualitative analyses are highly needed. In so doing, more accurate and reliable conclusions can be drawn.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the Institute for Research and Community Services of Universitas Lampung that supported this work [grant number 1471/UN26.21/PN/2020] and to all respondents who took part in the present study. They are also very grateful to experts for their insightful comments on the earlier draft of this paper.

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Appendix

LAMPUNG LANGUAGE USE AND MAINTENANCE IN THE FAMILY DOMAIN: A SURVEY

Dear Sir/Madam/Students,

We hope this survey finds you well.

We are currently conducting a survey on “Lampung language use in family domain,” which aims to see the Lampung language use and maintenance among your family members. Therefore, it really is a valuable contribution from you by filling out this survey that we can understand the real situation of Lampung language use. By filling out this questionnaire, you agree to take part in this survey. We guarantee your anonymity and confidentiality. Your name will NOT appear in the publication of the survey results. Please complete with honesty since this survey does not have any impact.

Thank you for your participation.

Researchers

A. Identity

Name :

Place of birth :

Sex :

Age :

Ethnic group :

B. Language use in the family domain

What language is spoken in your family domain?

Lampung

Indonesian

Indonesian and Lampung

Other local languages

Who uses the Lampung language for communication among your family members?

My parents, grandparents, father, mother, and other relatives

All of my family members

No one of my family members

In what contexts (of daily activities) do you use the Lampung language in the family domain?

Family life/household affairs

When conveying emotions, e.g., anger, love, and fear

Religious/spiritual life

Others

If you use the Lampung language within your family domain, what drives/motivates you to use the language?

I love the Lampung language

I want to maintain the Lampung language

It is a habit in my family from generation to generation

I am required to use the Lampung language by my parents and/or extended family

My extended family use the Lampung language

Others. Please specify ...

If you do not use the Lampung language within your family domain, what is your reason for not using the language?

I do not think it is necessary to use the Lampung language

My neighbors do not use the Lampung language either

The Lampung language is not a medium of instruction at schools

The Lampung language is not used at workforce

To make children get accustomed to using Indonesian language

To make children get accustomed to using a foreign language

Others. Please specify ...

C. Lampung language maintenance

What effort(s) have you made to maintain the Lampung language?

What are the obstacles and/or challenges of the Lampung language maintenance?

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Reviews

Per un appropriato studio accademico delle arti marziali

Recensione e riflessioni su: Marcello Ghilardi (a cura di). 2020. *Filosofia delle arti marziali: Percorsi tra forme e discipline del combattimento*. Milano – Udine: Mimesis. ISBN: 9788857564289. 216 pagine. Prezzo: Euro 16,00.

I contributi presenti all'interno del volume edito da Marcello Ghilardi, *Filosofia delle arti marziali: Percorsi tra forme e discipline del combattimento*, sono particolarmente ben accetti, vista la penuria di simili trattazioni nel contesto accademico nostrano. Potenzialmente, lo studio delle 'arti marziali' potrebbe tranquillamente diventare in futuro una disciplina a sé stante in Italia, ma questo dipenderebbe in primis dalla volontà collettiva della comunità di studiosi di fondare un nuovo campo di studi e, successivamente, dalla disposizione istituzionale a riconoscerlo e validarlo. Cionondimeno, uno studio accademico delle arti marziali potrebbe già rientrare come ulteriore specializzazione o oggetto d'indagine all'interno di altre discipline come l'antropologia, la sociologia, la storia, la filosofia ecc., e, nonostante a volte lo faccia, sarebbe auspicabile lo facesse più frequentemente. A questo proposito, nel revisionare il presente volume vorrei sollevare la questione di cosa potrebbe essere un appropriato studio accademico delle arti marziali, considerando che gli autori dei singoli interventi sono tutti accademici e, alcuni, anche praticanti di discipline marziali.

Per cominciare, si nota immediatamente che il volume si presenta come una serie di contributi sulle arti marziali che prendono come base d'appoggio la filosofia. Tale collegamento, sembrerebbe suggerire il curatore nell'introduzione (p. 8), va inteso in senso ampio, ossia come una sorta di stimolo a pensare, da un lato, *alle e sulle* arti marziali e, dall'altro, a pensare *con* le arti marziali. Il pensiero che ne scaturisce non può essere un mero ragionamento astratto, ma è un pensiero connesso al corpo, una sorta di filosofia dinamica che solo parzialmente può essere espressa su carta poiché scaturisce da una conoscenza incarnata, che va oltre le restrizioni di quel cogitare logico-razionale a cui il nostro sistema d'istruzione ci ha abituati. Il corpo, nell'atto di imparare, è posto in uno stato di immobilità all'interno del nostro ambiente scolastico ed educativo; gli alunni stanno seduti in un'aula limitando i loro movimenti e azioni fisiche al fine di acquisire nozioni teoriche e talune volte astratte. La dicotomia cartesiana di distinzione tra corpo e mente è quantomai evidente e la mente viene educata limitando e affliggendo il corpo, un fatto che trapela dal nome stesso attribuito al periodo di ristoro tra una lezione e un'altra: la 'ricreazione', termine indicante una reiterazione della creazione e quindi un vivificare che, in opposizione alla costrizione implicita nell'odierno apprendimento, indica un ristoro fisico. Le

arti marziali, pertanto, ridonano al corpo una sua centralità nella vita dell'uomo e mostrano come un apprendimento che si apra all'interazione consapevole tra corpo e mente possa inaugurare nuovi orizzonti del sapere. Questa fondamentale dimensione corporea è, inoltre, in accordo con studi recenti che tentano di ripristinare la centralità e primarietà del corpo anche all'interno di altri ambiti come, per esempio, lo studio delle religioni, in cui è stato per lungo tempo invece dismesso.¹ Infatti, penso si possano ravvisare più di un parallelismo tra lo studio delle religioni e quello delle arti marziali e qui di seguito se ne vedrà qualcuno nell'atto di revisionare il volume in questione.

Il capitolo introduttivo del volume è stato scritto dal curatore Marcello Ghilardi ("Introduzione", pp. 7-15), il quale presenta, storicizza e contestualizza il lemma 'arti marziali' e, così facendo, pone un interessante punto di riflessione sulla sua ambivalenza e pluralità di interpretazioni:

Nell'espressione "arte marziale" la differenza di accento che si conferisce all'aggettivo (*arte marziale*) oppure al sostantivo (*arte marziale*) modifica a sua volta il tipo di attenzione o interpretazione che se ne dà. Nel primo caso [...] si porta in primo piano il carattere combattivo e non solo agonistico della disciplina: essa è "marziale" in quanto connessa alla lotta, allo scontro, al confronto effettivo tra individui [...]. Nel secondo caso l'accento viene invece posto sulla dimensione artistica e (ri)creativa, al punto da accostarla implicitamente alle cosiddette "belle arti" per il suo valore estetico o formativo (pp. 12-13).

Questi due estremi interpretativi rappresentano anche i due estremi dell'immaginario collettivo associato alle arti marziali che va dal vederle come discipline brutali al ritenerle arti esotiche e mistiche. L'ambiguità terminologica e la copresenza di significati – che si riflettono nella pluralità delle pratiche marziali contemporanee che vanno dal praticante di *Mixed Martial Arts* (MMA) che combatte sul ring con l'obiettivo di indurre un tracollo fisico nell'avversario per vincere con un risolutivo *Knock Out*, all'appartato praticante di *iaidō* che esercita in maniera solitaria i suoi movimenti di estrazione della spada – richiama a una necessaria contestualizzazione e storicizzazione. A questo proposito, nell'introduzione Marcello Ghilardi discute brevemente della terminologia – principalmente in giapponese e cinese – associata all'identificazione dello studio dell'*ars* bellica in differenti culture e degli sviluppi storici come, per esempio, quello avvenuto in Giappone, in cui la disciplina del

¹ A questo proposito, si vedano a titolo esemplificativo i contributi di Radich (2016) e Gill (2020: 109-117, 196-207). Parte della mia stessa ricerca in ambito buddhologico (si vedano De Notariis 2018; 2019; 2019a) si è focalizzata su alcuni elementi come il corpo fatto di mente (*manomaya-kāya*) e i poteri psico-fisici (*iddhi*) la cui semplice esistenza ci esorta a indagare più a fondo la dimensione corporea all'interno del buddhismo, una tipologia di indagine che man mano sta prendendo piede, come ci dimostra il recente contributo di Shulman (2021).

combattimento da tecnica *jutsu* (術) si è trasformata in una via di perfezionamento etico e spirituale *dō* (道).

1. Tradizioni

All'introduzione seguono tre sezioni, la prima delle quali è inaugurata dal contributo di Aldo Tollini "Lo zen nell'arte della spada: Traduzione dell'*Ittōsai sensei kenpōsho*" (pp. 21-46), in cui viene fornita una traduzione del 'Trattato della spada del maestro Ittōsai' (*Ittōsai sensei kenpōsho*; 刀齋先生劍法書), di Kotōda Yoshinao che, così facendo, tramanda fino a noi una testimonianza della tradizione di scherma giapponese iniziata da Itō ittōsai, le cui date sono incerte, ma che si presume essere vissuto tra la fine del XVI e l'inizio del XVII secolo. Questo testo è un mirabile esempio di come l'arte di combattere può fondersi con un percorso di raffinamento spirituale che, nel caso specifico, passa attraverso uno studio e un'acquisizione del controllo sulla mente/cuore (心). Benché il trattato sembri svilupparsi principalmente intorno a quella che sembra essere un'interazione tra abilità tecnica più propriamente fisica e principi mentali, alle volte il testo sembra alludere a una certa superiorità di una mente adeguatamente allenata e sviluppata come, per esempio, quando si afferma che: "[p]er mezzo dell'applicazione alla mente concentrata [su un'unica azione] ci si può allontanare da quanto ci è stato tramandato nell'insegnamento e porsi su un altro piano della trasmissione dell'insegnamento" (p. 30). In questo passo sembra essere implicato un trascendimento della tradizione, così come altrove pare si sostenga che la maestria tecnica, per quanto ampiamente sviluppata, verrebbe meno se non adeguatamente accompagnata da uno sviluppo spirituale: "sebbene si sia abili nella tecnica non si può vincere se non si ha il principio del 'cuore retto' [心実]" (p. 41; parentesi quadre aggiunte sulla base della n. 119). Questi esempi ci mostrano come un lavoro integrativo tra corpo e psiche non sia una mera opzione, ma condizione necessaria per mettere adeguatamente in atto il gesto marziale. Infatti, la preparazione tecnica dello spadaccino passa anche e soprattutto dall'interiorizzazione della disciplina e la spada che si porta al fianco finisce per essere il pretto riflesso esteriore della spada che si porta seco nel cuore:

Se affiliamo dentro il nostro cuore una lama pura, la spada che portiamo al fianco diventerà una spada importante. Una tale spada che originariamente sta dentro il nostro cuore, non si allontana neppure per un attimo da noi e, a seconda delle circostanze, può liberamente dare la morte o dare la vita (p. 43).

In questo passo troviamo anche un'evidente indicazione di quella che ritengo essere un'importante caratteristica, tra le più arcaiche, delle arti marziali, ossia l'aver a che fare con il problema della vita e della morte. A questo proposito, si noterà che questo è anche un elemento tipico delle religioni e, non a caso, il connubio tra le due è spesso presente.² La morte implica un certo grado di urgenza in quanto pone un orizzonte di limite alla vita e, pertanto, spinge l'uomo a intraprendere un'indagine volta alla risoluzione – o perlomeno alla gestione – del problema. Nella religione troviamo lo sviluppo di soteriologie al fine di guadagnarsi una qualche forma di salvezza, l'esecuzione di riti funebri per conciliare e influire sul trapasso e così via. Invece, in uno scontro o combattimento, sia esso una guerra o un duello, l'individuo coinvolto vede immediatamente approssimarsi a sé l'orizzonte della morte, ma a questo punto cosa può fare? A questo punto non può fare niente. In suo potere vi è solo l'allenarsi in previsione dell'evento, ossia praticare una qualche forma di disciplina che possa incrementare le sue possibilità di sopravvivenza. In questo senso, un'arte marziale tenta di allontanare l'orizzonte della morte che un conflitto violento, invece, avvicina. Come disciplina non può essere solo fisica o solo psichica, poiché il problema della morte coinvolge l'uomo nella sua totalità, giacché non si vive e non si muore un poco alla volta e un pezzo per volta (se non metaforicamente).³

Il problema della vita e della morte sottende anche al contributo di Krishna Del Toso “Il movimento del concetto: Azione marziale, competizione e sacrificio nell'India antica” (pp. 47-71). Il capitolo presenta un'interessante interpretazione basata sull'analisi di resoconti testuali e teorie interpretative di stampo accademico di come la cultura indiana possa aver operato una sorta di ritualizzazione della guerra volta alla gestione della violenza a essa inerente. L'indagine parte da alcuni resoconti presenti nel *R̥gveda* – la più antica testimonianza letteraria indiana a nostra disposizione – per terminare con il poema epico *Mahābhārata*. Inizialmente, vengono introdotte fonti antiche attestanti la pratica della guerra e le conoscenze indiane in ambito marziale. La frequenza dei conflitti non era scevra da risvolti cruenti e, probabilmente, proprio per evitare troppe ripetute carneficine,

² Nel trattato di spada in questione il connubio è con il buddhismo zen, mentre per una trattazione più ampia sul rapporto tra zen e tradizione guerriera giapponese si veda King (2000), in cui si discute anche del rapporto con la morte (ad es. King 2000: 185-194).

³ Questo dovrebbe anche far riflettere su come la sportivizzazione delle discipline marziali possa contribuire all'allontanamento dell'arte stessa rispetto all'urgenza e alla necessità da cui è nata. La competizione agonistica indirizza necessariamente la pratica verso una vittoria che è comunque ottenuta in un ambito sportivo e fortemente si discosta da una pratica volta ad addestrare l'individuo per la propria sopravvivenza in un contesto di rischio della vita stessa. L'orizzonte della morte nella competizione sportiva è sostituito dall'orizzonte della sconfitta, benché in talune discipline si possa effettivamente andare incontro a seri infortuni e finanche alla morte stessa. Di contro, vi è da sottolineare che le condizioni di vita nelle società moderne sono certamente più pacifiche rispetto al passato e, pertanto, la dimensione agonistica restituisce in parte l'esperienza di fronteggiare un avversario non-cooperativo altrimenti inespugnabile.

l'autore suppone che furono escogitate soluzioni alternative. Una di queste è quella che nel testo viene denominata 'piccola guerra', ossia uno scontro in cui una formazione scelta di combattenti su carri trainati da cavalli di uno schieramento affrontava la formazione scelta avversaria senza coinvolgere l'interezza delle forze armate. Si ipotizza che questa soluzione abbia preceduto la corsa dei carri trainati da cavalli, una forma di competizione agonistica equestre con una posta in gioco. Da notare che anche nella guerra vera e propria la fazione vincente ottiene qualcosa, sia essa l'annessione di un territorio, l'accesso alle risorse e così via. Pertanto, ciò che si ravvisa non è un annullamento dello scontro, ma la sua trasformazione in una pratica via via più regolamentata e con una progressiva riduzione della violenza. Sempre in quest'ottica è da inquadrarsi la pratica del sacrificio (*yajña*), che l'autore mostra condividere il medesimo vocabolario con il contesto bellico. Infatti, il sacrificio, similmente alla guerra, implica un certo grado di violenza che si esplica nell'atto dell'immolazione di una vittima, che in taluni casi poteva addirittura consistere in un essere umano. Testi di epoca più tarda, ossia quelli ritualistici conosciuti come *Brāhmaṇa*, optano per una soluzione più teatrale, rappresentando simbolicamente l'uccisione sacrificale, piuttosto che effettivamente eseguirla. Tale raffigurazione dell'atto cruento non si discosta dal nostro orizzonte di pensiero, considerando che a un certo livello simbolico tutte le settimane al culmine della funzione domenicale della messa Gesù Cristo, denominato l'“agnello di Dio”, si immola per l'umanità e la sua carne e sangue diventano vitto e libagione per l'uomo. Un altro esempio trattato è quello del sacrificio del cavallo (*aśvamedha*), che si configura come un rituale di chiara natura militare che introduce anche un elemento aleatorio. Il cavallo poteva girare libero per un anno seguito da un contingente armato e se fosse entrato in un territorio non appartenente al sovrano, egli sarebbe stato legittimato a conquistarlo. Questa specie di gioco d'azzardo fungeva anche da sgravamento morale per il sovrano e introduceva la possibilità di una risoluzione del conflitto con poco o nessun spargimento di sangue: il regnante avversario poteva infatti accettare il fato e arrendersi o, nel caso avesse intercettato il cavallo per tempo, uccidere la bestia. Infine, viene discusso di come nel *Mahābhārata* la battaglia stessa rappresenti l'atto sacrificale e quindi a questo si sostituisca, mentre finora era stato mostrato come progressivamente l'atto sacrificale e in generale la violenza ritualizzata abbiano sostituito lo scontro bellico. Tale fatto, a parer mio, è indice e buon esempio di come la creatività umana sia in grado di elaborare soluzioni culturali a problematiche complesse e allo stesso tempo (ri)modellare l'attribuzione di significati a seconda delle esigenze.

Questa prima parte si conclude con il contributo di Leonardo Vittorio Arena “Il rotolo nudo di Musashi” (pp. 73-81), che risulta essere marcatamente congetturale ed eclettico – specialmente se paragonato ai precedenti capitoli con una più netta impostazione storico-filologica – tentando comparazioni e parallelismi con tradizioni filosofiche europee, cinesi e indiane. Lo scritto tratta

dell'interpretazione di un capitolo del 'Libro dei cinque anelli' (*Gorin no sho*; 五輪の書) intitolato *kū no maki* (空の巻), che l'autore peculiarmente traduce come 'Il rotolo del nudo', intendendo per 'nudo' il termine *kū* (空), generalmente tradotto come 'vuoto' o 'vacuità'.

2. Pratiche

I contributi della seconda sezione hanno in comune l'accento sugli elementi più introspettivi e 'interni' delle arti marziali. Questi elementi sono, perlopiù, di carattere esperienziale, nel senso che una loro trattazione puramente astratta e teorica risulterebbe essere fortemente limitante. Essi implicano anche un lavoro con e sulla mente e tale lavoro è strettamente legato al corpo fisico. Col corpo si può andare a influire sui processi mentali e, viceversa, tramite determinate azioni mentali si può andare ad agire a livello fisico sulla qualità del movimento corporeo. Questa interazione virtuosa tocca un ambito del sapere altrimenti escluso dal comune modello educativo di stampo principalmente intellettualistico e riconnette l'uomo a quella che è la sua natura, ossia quella di essere un corpo pensante, una vita (auto)cosciente.

Questa seconda sezione si apre con lo scritto di Marco Favretti "Spazio-tempo e coscienza: Evoluzione corporea e ricerca spirituale in Aikido" (pp. 85-98). In questo contributo l'autore evidenzia come un'arte marziale come l'*aikidō* (合気道) possa rappresentare a tutti gli effetti un percorso autoconoscitivo che si esplica tramite un idioma iscritto nel corpo. Partendo da una concezione olistica dell'uomo, vengono descritti i benefici di una pratica che tramite il movimento corporeo aiuta l'individuo a liberarsi da schemi mentali ereditati, poiché essi possono riflettersi in certe rigidità fisiche. Attraverso il movimento si rieduca il corpo mediante lo scioglimento delle rigidità e questo superamento delle limitazioni fisiche si riversa trasversalmente su altre dimensioni dell'"essere uomo", ossia sulla sua parte emotiva e mentale. L'esecuzione di una tecnica che coinvolge due praticanti è paragonata a una sorta di rito iniziatico di morte e rinascita, in cui l'attacco rappresenta una minaccia simbolica di morte che, benché simbolica, è in grado di mettere realmente in crisi il ricevente, che, superandola, ne esce fortificato.

Il secondo contributo di questa sezione è quello di Salvatore Giammusso "Il corpo animoso: Vitalità e disciplina del corpo nel taijiquan" (pp. 99-131) che fornisce una panoramica storica e teorica sul *tàijíquán* (太極拳) evidenziando, in particolare, gli aspetti interni dell'arte. Un cosiddetto 'lavoro interno' pone il praticante di fronte a concetti liminari, come, per esempio, quello di *qì* (氣, semplificato come 气), traducibile come 'energia' o 'energia vitale'. Scrive a questo proposito Giammusso:

il *qi* è una nozione molto ricca di implicazioni filosofiche, psicologiche e cosmologiche e non può essere ridotta a una formulazione fisico-matematica nel senso della scienza moderna. Ad esempio, il *qi* può essere facilmente sentito, specie nei palmi delle mani, e manipolato, ossia usato consapevolmente per fini marziali o terapeutici [...] Si intende che fenomeni di questo genere, quand'anche possano essere misurati, sono soprattutto modalità qualitative dell'esperienza, si riferiscono cioè ai processi energetici per come vengono vissuti su un piano esperienziale (p. 103).

In questo caso, è chiaro che l'esperienza è prerogativa principale per lo studio di determinati fenomeni e si pone come punto di incontro tra l'assoluta astrazione e la più brutta fisicità. L'universo mentale diventa in un qualche modo tangibile mentre la rigida fissità corporea allenta le briglie del determinismo fisico per concedersi scorci su sprazzi di realtà altrimenti solo immaginabili. La dimensione energetica, in questo senso, si frappone tra due estremi, tra l'intangibile e il materiale, costituendosi come punto d'incontro. Di ciò, vi è anche uno sfuggibile riferimento nel 'Trattato della spada del maestro Ittōsai' tradotto da Aldo Tollini e discusso in precedenza. Infatti, nonostante nel trattato il tema centrale risulti essere il rapporto corpo/mente, è riportato quasi di sfuggita che "Il corpo è mosso dallo spirito [*ki*, 氣], e lo spirito si dirige dove vanno i movimenti della mente. Quindi, se la mente si muove, anche lo spirito si muove, e se lo spirito si muove anche il corpo si muove" (p. 31; parentesi quadre aggiunte da me sulla base della n. 51 nel testo).⁴

L'ultimo contributo di questa sezione è quello di Luca Zanini "Gli stili interni del *gongfu* cinese" (pp. 133-158) che propone una disamina degli stili interni del *gōngfū* (功夫), conosciuti anche come la 'famiglia interna' (*nèijiā*; 内家), ossia il *tàijíquán* ('Pugno della polarità suprema'; 太极拳), lo *xíngyìquán* ('Pugno della forma e dell'intenzione'; 形意拳) e il *bāguàzhǎng* ('Palmo degli otto trigrammi'; 八卦掌). Nella sua disamina degli stili interni, Zanini tocca molti punti teoretici interessanti come, per esempio, il quesito sulla distinzione tra uno stile di combattimento rispetto a un altro, al cui riguardo scrive: "[n]on è certo il collezionare tecniche o imitare banalmente il movimento di un animale, ma la coerenza di un sistema che aderisce a una serie di principi specifici" (p. 135). Similmente, viene trattata la definizione teorica delle componenti 'interne' o 'esterne' di un'arte marziale e la necessaria integrazione tra le due (pp. 137-141). Da sfondo al contributo sembrano esserci anche delle riflessioni di stampo antropologico e sociologico sul rapporto dell'arte marziale con un'ipotetica e reale situazione di combattimento, di come questa influisca sul suo stile e, di conseguenza, sulla sua intrinseca violenza

⁴ Tollini riporta questo passo tra parentesi, poiché, scrive in n. 52, esso appare in piccolo nel testo. Stando così le cose, sembrerebbe quasi di essere di fronte a una glossa al testo.

che mal si adatta alla mite società moderna (p. 135; pp. 147-148). Non a caso, noterei, l'ultima sezione del volume in questione tratta del valore delle arti marziali a livello educativo e pedagogico e quindi, in un certo senso, della loro importanza all'interno di una società pacifica, mentre invece non vi è menzione del loro utilizzo in ambito militare o delle forze dell'ordine, che rappresenterebbero gli organi sociali a cui è consentito un uso legittimo della forza, con la relativa violenza che si porta seco.

3. Educazioni

L'ultima sezione, per l'appunto, si occupa delle arti marziali all'interno dell'ambito educativo e si apre con il contributo di Francesca Antonacci "Le arti marziali come discipline educative tra combattimento e performance" (pp. 161-177). L'autrice mostra come aggressività e violenza non siano da rimuovere, ma piuttosto da integrare e rielaborare e ciò può avvenire tramite la rappresentazione dello scontro che ha luogo nella pratica moderna delle discipline marziali. Il combattimento, infatti, è delimitato a luoghi e spazi circoscritti ed è disciplinato e, come tale, trasforma la violenza caotica in un oggetto di cultura, in parte fruibile e apprezzabile anche dall'esterno. Le energie distruttive così incanalate prendono quasi la forma del 'gioco', in quanto attività competitiva regolamentata a sfondo ludico, e coinvolgono quella che l'autrice definisce come un'"energia di lusso" (p. 168), ossia un'energia che va oltre la meccanicità della vita ordinaria volta al risparmio energetico e l'unica in grado di far accedere l'individuo a quella dimensione di libertà indipendente dal sistema dei bisogni. Questa sorta di messa in scena è anche paragonata alla performance teatrale, la quale, al suo culmine, deve diventare arte incarnata nella vita individuale e, per questo, per certi versi unica e irripetibile. Quest'ultimo punto pone un'interessante questione che chiama in ballo la tensione esistente tra tradizione e innovazione, poiché un'arte incarnata in un individuo sarà simile, ma non uguale, a se stessa e l'individuo che incarna un'arte potrà esprimerla manifestando il suo potere creativo, il quale potrebbe anche avere dei risvolti trasformativi nei confronti dell'arte stessa.

Il secondo contributo è quello di Andrea Zhok "Il karate come educazione inattuale" (pp. 179-191). L'autore intende l'aggettivo 'inattuale' "nel senso nietzchiano del termine, come nella seconda delle *Considerazioni inattuali*, dove egli scrive che l'inattualità consiste nell'agire contro il proprio tempo" (p. 180). In questo senso Zhok parla dell'educazione del e nel *karate* (空手) come un'"educazione inattuale", in quanto sia nella forma che nel contenuto veicola tratti di vita appartenenti al Giappone premoderno. In questo scritto, che è dichiaratamente scaturito dall'esperienza personale dell'autore, sono presenti interessanti spunti di riflessione come, per esempio, l'importanza di una pratica vissuta in contrapposizione a un sapere derivante unicamente dalla parola scritta, poiché l'insegnamento di

un'arte deve, per necessità, basarsi su meccanismi di esemplificazione e trasmissione diretta; il che porta a considerare il *kata* (型), una sequenza formale di tecniche da eseguirsi in solo, come una sorta di libro vissuto. L'inattualità si esplica anche nelle forme di etichetta e nelle interazioni sociali all'interno del *dōjō* (道場), il luogo adibito all'allenamento, tramite il rispetto – originatosi dal fatto che il *karate* era, in principio, connesso con il problema della vita e della morte – e il contesto predemocratico, in cui si trovano a relazionarsi maestro (massima autorità) e allievi (subordinati). Questa cessazione volontaria dei propri diritti democratici sembrerebbe essere condizione necessaria per acquisire nuovi abiti sensomotori che non sono per nulla naturali, ma anzi seguono a una decostruzione della risposta istintuale, e che vanno allenati fino al punto di essere naturalizzati per un'adeguata messa in atto. Un'esperienza pratica ma al contempo controllata della realtà è, infine, quella del *kumite* (組手): una forma di combattimento regolamentata che immerge il praticante in uno scontro con un avversario non cooperativo e che dona un insegnamento concreto su una possibile interazione di conflitto, non ottenibile altrimenti.

A conclusione del volume vi è il contributo di Marcello Ghilardi “Educare il conflitto” (pp. 193-207), che prende ed elabora alcuni punti salienti, anche emersi in precedenza. Viene evidenziato come le arti marziali siano un ambito in cui è possibile esercitare la pratica di un linguaggio non concettuale che non si risolve nella sfera astratta del pensiero, ma che coinvolge l'intero apparato psicofisico. Infatti, la violenza viene mediata tramite la sua messa in atto a livello fisico e questo è anche uno degli elementi che separa le arti marziali da altre forme d'arte, come la danza o il teatro, da cui possono similmente scaturire tipologie non concettuali di conoscenza. Similmente, il combattimento come forma regolamentata di conflitto pone il praticante nella condizione di sperimentare fino a che punto il gesto tecnico sia stato naturalizzato e quanto il proprio apparato psicofisico sia pronto a reagire a un'alterità conflittuale e potenzialmente pericolosa. Paradossalmente, l'avversario contro cui ci si scontra collabora positivamente alla propria crescita tramite l'opposizione.

4. L'appropriato studio accademico delle arti marziali

Al termine della lettura di un volume che presenta svariate trattazioni che coinvolgono diverse discipline marziali appartenenti a regioni geografiche distinte e talora di epoche differenti, ci si potrebbe chiedere se sia possibile stabilire qualche linea generale per quello che potrebbe essere definito un 'appropriato studio accademico delle arti marziali'. A onor del vero, l'intento divulgativo del libro in questione è ben esplicito e, pertanto, la seguente riflessione non intacca la validità dell'opera, ma scaturisce dal fatto che tutti gli autori coinvolti sono accademici.

A questo punto la domanda da porsi è: cosa si intende per un ‘appropriato studio accademico delle arti marziali’? Non che questo sia necessariamente dovuto, ma nel caso dovesse essere intrapreso è chiaro che necessiterebbe di una propria metodologia. Infatti, non si può dire, più in generale, che non esistano studi sulle arti marziali o anche, in particolare, che non ci siano studi accademici; ma quanti di questi studi accademici possono dirsi ‘appropriati’? Potrebbe sembrare che l’aggettivo ‘appropriato’ sia leggermente sfidante, poiché implica l’esistenza di studi accademici ‘inappropriati’ e, in questo senso, effettivamente lo è. A questo proposito è utile notare come anche qui il parallelismo con lo studio della religione sia abbastanza cogente, poiché pure in quest’ultimo campo è scaturita una riflessione sulla possibilità di determinare l’appropriatezza o meno di uno studio sulla religione che non sia esso stesso religioso, ma, per l’appunto, propriamente accademico. È stato fatto notare che quando si è aperta la possibilità di insegnare e studiare la religione la prima generazione di studiosi in questo nuovo campo era costituita da individui che avevano ricevuto una formazione religiosa e, quindi, erano religiosamente orientati (il più delle volte erano cristiani; cfr. Gill 2020: 10). Questo fatto ha fortemente influenzato i primi sviluppi della disciplina e, infatti, la categoria prototipica di ‘religione’ fu costruita su modello delle religioni abramitiche (cfr. Gill 2020: 176). Infatti, non penso sia un caso che la maggior parte dei contributori del volume sotto analisi oltre a essere accademici dei più svariati campi del sapere – e.g. filosofia, pedagogia, estetica e, finanche, fisica matematica – siano anche praticanti di discipline marziali. Questo potrebbe essere in parte dovuto al fatto che si stanno ancora muovendo i primi passi verso uno studio delle arti marziali che possa diventare disciplina indipendente.⁵ Similmente, si può notare come alcune fonti utilizzate siano prettamente di natura confessionale, ossia opere scritte da maestri della disciplina sotto analisi che, anche se sicuramente sono da considerarsi esperti ed edotti sulla questione, non necessariamente seguono metodologie tipiche delle scienze umane o anche più banalmente hanno una loro agenda di interessi personale e fortemente orientata. Per fare un paragone con lo studio accademico della religione, sarebbe come studiare il cristianesimo basandosi su ciò che ha scritto il Papa. È chiaro che le fonti sono fonti e ognuna, a suo modo, può avere una propria utilità, ma è anche vero che bisogna assegnare a ognuna la propria dimensione legittima e uno scritto del Papa in carica è più da considerarsi una sorta di esegesi moderna che esprime il punto di vista specifico della tradizione cattolica, piuttosto che un distaccato contributo storico-filologico sulla questione. Questo non vuole assolutamente dire che un religioso non possa contribuire a produrre materiale accademicamente rilevante, ma anzi nel campo degli studi sul buddhismo a cui afferisco abbiamo esempi di eccellenti studiosi che erano o sono anche religiosi, come, per esempio Étienne

⁵ A onor del vero, pure io che ora rifletto sulla questione sono stato e sono praticante di arti marziali.

Lamotte, religioso cristiano e studioso di buddhismo, o anche innumerevoli monaci buddhisti che hanno composto scritti e studi oggi giorno fondamentali nel campo della buddhologia come Bhikkhu Bodhi, Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli e Bhikkhu Anālayo. Il discrimine sta nella finalità dello scritto, nel pubblico atteso, nella metodologia utilizzata e nell'esistenza o meno di certi assunti di base indiscutibili. A questo proposito è utile considerare lo studio di LaRochelle (2014) sui manuali di *tàijíquán* redatti per un pubblico del nord America, il quale mostra chiaramente come manuali scritti per praticanti di una determinata area geografica vengano adulterati per andare in contro alle aspettative dell'audience a cui sono rivolti, finendo così per reinventare la tradizione. È legittimo quindi interrogarsi sulla validità delle informazioni rinvenibili in testi del genere, poiché la scelta e la modalità di utilizzo delle fonti non può essere una tematica secondaria in una riflessione sulle modalità accademicamente appropriate per studiare le arti marziali. Infatti, se da un lato è prevedibile che una disciplina che muove i suoi primi passi dovrà fare affidamento anche su fonti non direttamente scaturite da un ambiente accademico, d'altro canto sarà anche dovere di quei primi studiosi che si avventurano in questa nuova strada impervia effettuare delle verifiche sulle fonti tramite metodi veicolati da anglicismi quali *storytracking* e *fact-checking*.⁶

Le tematiche sollevate dai contributi presenti nel volume sotto revisione dovrebbero far riflettere sulla possibilità di adottare più frequentemente le arti marziali come oggetto di studio ma, contemporaneamente, vi è la necessità di elaborare approcci alla ricerca che possano soddisfare i criteri che contraddistinguono un prodotto di ricerca accademica da uno scritto amatoriale o da elaborazioni che si sviluppano in seno alla tradizione oggetto di studio. Nonostante, come è più volte stato fatto notare nell'opera recensita, le arti marziali coinvolgano un ambito di conoscenza prettamente esperienziale, difficilmente riducibile ad elaborazioni teoretiche, vi sono nondimeno dimensioni storiche, filologiche, filosofiche, sociali e antropologiche del fenomeno, le quali esigono appropriate trattazioni.

Quindi, tornando al quesito su cosa si potrebbe considerare un appropriato studio accademico sulle arti marziali, possiamo arrischiare la seguente risposta: esso sarà uno studio che dovrà sviluppare una crescente consapevolezza di se stesso – in termini di oggetto e finalità dello studio, della propria posizione nel panorama accademico, delle proprie limitazioni – e dovrà basarsi, come le altre discipline d'altronde, su un adeguato uso delle fonti. Questo, ovviamente, solo per iniziare, mentre l'auspicio è

⁶ A questo proposito si veda Gill (2020: 149-189), in cui si parla dello *storytracking* effettuato da Jonathan Z. Smith sugli scritti di Mircea Eliade.

che, crescendo, esso possa iniziare a percorrere strade proprie, discostandosi dai sentieri battuti per trovare una propria indipendenza e inaugurare nuovi orizzonti conoscitivi.

5. Alcune osservazioni e note conclusive

Per ultimo ho lasciato alcune osservazioni critiche sul testo in questione. Innanzitutto, vi è da notare che due contributi del volume mancano di riferimenti bibliografici puntuali all'interno del testo o eventualmente in nota: il primo è quello di Leonardo Vittorio Arena, che tuttavia fornisce una bibliografia finale; il secondo è quello di Luigi Zanini che è privo di qualsivoglia riferimento bibliografico. Vi è da dire che entrambi gli autori hanno già trattato tematiche simili in pubblicazioni precedenti (come si evince dalle biografie finali) e quindi, presumibilmente, si stavano basando sui loro precedenti lavori. Ciò non toglie che questo intacca il senso di omogeneità dei contributi all'interno del volume e, ricollegandoci al discorso precedente, rende difficile il loro utilizzo in ambito accademico per via del fatto che non è possibile effettuare una verifica delle fonti e dei riferimenti.

In secondo luogo, è necessario emendare un'informazione fornita da Giammusso (p. 129):

L'etimologia ci insegna che la meditazione – come la medicina – è una pratica che “cura”: nelle due discipline è infatti presente la stessa radice *med* dell'antico sanscrito, che significa “aver cura di qualcosa” (e quindi anche “sanare”).

In questo caso sarebbe meglio specificare che la radice *med* a cui l'autore si riferisce non è dal sanscrito, ma piuttosto è una radice ricostruita dal protoindoeuropeo.⁷ Si può inoltre notare di sfuggita, ricollegandoci nuovamente al discorso sulle fonti, che il passo sopracitato è privo di riferimento bibliografico.

In conclusione, nonostante le poche osservazioni critiche sopra riportate, ritengo che il volume qui analizzato sia un contributo certamente interessante per il panorama italiano e di sicuro fornisce spunti di riflessione su cui basarsi per ulteriori approfondimenti. Di per sé è piacevole da leggersi e mostra come l'ambito delle arti marziali possa essere un valido oggetto di studio accademico e come un approccio più accademico alle arti marziali non necessariamente risulterebbe noioso, ma anzi potrebbe fornire al praticante un'accresciuta consapevolezza sulla propria pratica. Come accennato

⁷ A questo proposito si vedano Charen (1951: 217) e Pokorny (1959: 705-706). Una ricerca sul dizionario di sanscrito Monier-Williams (1899: 832) riporta che *med* è la forma forte di *mid* e quest'ultima radice significa “to grow fat” (Monier-Williams 1899: 817), o in alternativa è equivalente a *mith*, ma anche quest'ultima radice non veicolerebbe il significato atteso (cfr. Monier-Williams 1899: 816-817).

all’inizio della presente trattazione, il volume prende come base d’appoggio la filosofia, ponendo la trattazione come un’opportunità per il lettore di pensare *con e sulle* arti marziali e, per quel che mi riguarda e per quanto vale, ha funzionato.

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